

**Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional
Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan**

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Dear **Kseniia Zhuikova**

This letter now confirms that your research project titled: “Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan” 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,

Syed Abdul Manan

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Abstract

Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has a predominantly bilingual, Kazakh – Russian, population. Consequently, these two languages are traditional media of instruction (MoI) at secondary school. The idea of trinity of languages, promoted by the government since the 2010-s, introduced the third MoI - English, as a tool for modernization and internationalization of education. At secondary school English was assigned for teaching science subjects in higher grades. However, the reform aimed at English-medium instruction (EMI) at public schools was successfully realized only in elite state networks, while at mainstream schools it encountered such significant challenges that it was suspended for an indefinite period. Alongside public sector, EMI is implemented in various forms at private schools. Research on EMI at private sector in Kazakhstan remains limited; in particular, there is a lack of studies that conceptualize EMI transition as a systemic process involving interrelated policies, as well as curricular and instructional adaptations that enable a gradual shift from students' first language (L1) to full EMI. The purpose of this case study was to investigate how internal policies, curricular and pedagogical adjustments facilitate the transition from students' L1 to English in a private school in Kazakhstan, drawing on Cummins' (2000) distinction between early- and late-exit models of transitional bilingual education as a theoretical lens. The study adopted a qualitative design, drawing on semi-structured interviews with school administrators and teachers, as well as document analysis of the school's website and institutional materials. The findings indicated that the school employs a hybrid model implying integration of state and international curricula and late-exit bilingual education. The school's curriculum is also modified by the introduction of additional subjects in English, early start of English language classes and increased number of hours. The

findings also reveal acceptance of bilingual instruction, cross-curriculum approach, promotion of teacher collaboration, and enhanced attention to students' wellbeing as a policy and as a pedagogical strategy. It may be concluded that EMI transition at secondary schools needs a more systemic approach, possible modifications of English curriculum, increased institutional support of interdisciplinary collaboration. Moreover, the study advocates for early preparation for EMI through integration of language and content by subject and language teachers, as well as for a gradual increase in the proportion of instruction in English, rather than the abrupt implementation of full EMI.

Keywords: private schools, EMI transition, late-exit bilingual education, school policies, curricular and instructional adaptations

Аңдатпа

Ағылшын тілінде оқытуға көшу: Қазақстандағы жеке мектептегі оқу бағдарламасы мен оқыту әдістеріндегі бейімделулерді зерттеу

Қазақстан халқы негізінен қазақ және орыс тілдерін қатар қолданатын қостілді болып табылады. Осыған байланысты аталған екі тіл орта білім беру жүйесінде дәстүрлі оқыту тілдері (ОТ) ретінде қалыптасқан. 2010-жылдардан бастап мемлекеттік деңгейде ілгерілетілген үштілділік саясаты білім беруді жаңғырту және интернационалдандыру құралы ретінде үшінші оқыту тілі - ағылшын тілін енгізуді көздеді. Орта білім беру деңгейінде ағылшын тілі жоғары сыныптарда жаратылыстану пәндерін оқыту тілі ретінде белгіленді. Алайда мемлекеттік мектептерде ағылшын тілінде оқытуға (ЕМІ) көшуге бағытталған реформа негізінен элиталық мемлекеттік білім беру желілерінде ғана сәтті жүзеге асырылды, ал жалпы білім беретін мектептерде ол елеулі қиындықтарға тап болып, белгісіз мерзімге тоқтатылды. Мемлекеттік сектордан бөлек, жекеменшік мектептерде ЕМІ әртүрлі форматта жүзеге асырылуда. Дегенмен Қазақстандағы жекеменшік мектептердегі ЕМІ бойынша зерттеулер шектеулі; әсіресе ЕМІ-ге өтуді өзара байланысты саясаттар, сондай-ақ оқушылардың бірінші тілінен (L1) толық ағылшын тілінде оқытуға біртіндеп көшуге мүмкіндік беретін оқу бағдарламалық және педагогикалық бейімдеулер жүйесі ретінде қарастыратын зерттеулер жеткіліксіз. Аталған жағдайды ескере отырып, бұл кейс-зерттеудің мақсаты - Қазақстандағы жекеменшік мектептердің бірінде оқушылардың L1 тілінен ағылшын тіліне көшу үдерісін қамтамасыз ететін ішкі саясаттардың, оқу бағдарламалық және педагогикалық бейімдеулердің қалай жүзеге асырылатынын зерттеу болып табылады. Зерттеу Камминс (2000) ұсынған өтпелі қостілді білім берудің ерте және кеш шығу модельдері арасындағы жіктеуін теориялық негіз

ретінде қолданады. Зерттеу сапалық әдіснамаға негізделіп, мектеп әкімшілігі мен мұғалімдермен жүргізілген жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттар, сондай-ақ мектептің ресми веб-сайты мен институционалдық құжаттарын талдауды қамтиды

Зерттеу нәтижелері мектептің мемлекеттік және халықаралық оқу бағдарламаларын кіріктіретін гибриді модельді және кеш шығу қостілді білім беру тәсілін қолданатынын көрсетті. Сонымен қатар, оқу бағдарламасы ағылшын тіліндегі қосымша пәндерді енгізу, ағылшын тілін ерте кезеңнен бастап оқыту және сағат санын арттыру арқылы бейімделгені анықталды. Нәтижелер екітілді оқытудың қабылдануын, пәнаралық (кросс-куррикулумдық) тәсілді, мұғалімдер арасындағы ынтымақтастықты дамытуға бағытталған саясаттарды, сондай-ақ оқушылардың әл-ауқатына саясат деңгейінде де, педагогикалық стратегия ретінде де ерекше назар аударылатынын көрсетеді. Қорытындылай келе, орта білім беру деңгейінде ЕМІ-ге көшу жүйелі тәсілді, ағылшын тілі оқу бағдарламасына ықтимал өзгерістер енгізуді және пәнаралық ынтымақтастықты институционалдық деңгейде күшейтуді талап етеді. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу пән мұғалімдері мен тіл мұғалімдері тарапынан тіл мен мазмұнды кіріктіру арқылы ЕМІ-ге ерте дайындық жүргізуді, сондай-ақ толық ЕМІ-ді бірден енгізудің орнына, ағылшын тілінде оқыту үлесін біртіндеп арттыруды ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: жекеменшік мектептер, ЕМІ-ге көшу, кеш шығу қостілді білім беру, мектеп саясаты, оқу бағдарламалық және педагогикалық бейімдеулер.

Аннотация

Переход на обучение на английском языке: исследование учебно-программных и методико-педагогических адаптаций в частной школе в Казахстане

Население Казахстана является преимущественно двуязычным, говорящим на казахском и русском языках. Соответственно, эти два языка традиционно используются в качестве языков обучения (ЯО) в системе среднего образования. Концепция триединства языков, продвигаемая государством с 2010-х годов, ввела третий язык обучения, английский, как инструмент модернизации и интернационализации образования. На уровне среднего образования английский язык был определён как язык преподавания естественно-научных дисциплин в старших классах. Однако реформа, направленная на внедрение англоязычного обучения в государственных школах, была успешно реализована лишь в элитных государственных образовательных сетях, тогда как в обычных школах она столкнулась с серьёзными трудностями и была фактически приостановлена на неопределённый срок. Наряду с государственным сектором, англоязычное обучение в различных формах реализуется и в частных школах. Вместе с тем исследования ЕМІ в частном секторе Казахстана остаются ограниченными; в частности, отсутствуют работы, рассматривающие переход к ЕМІ как системный процесс, включающий институциональную политику, учебно-программные и педагогические адаптации, связанные друг с другом и обеспечивающие постепенный переход от первого языка учащихся (L1) к полноценному обучению на английском языке.

Целью данного кейс-исследования является изучение того, каким образом внутренние политики, а также учебно-программные и методико-педагогические адаптации способствуют переходу от L1 учащихся к английскому языку в частной школе Казахстана, с опорой на различие между моделями раннего и позднего

выхода в рамках переходного двуязычного образования, предложенное Камминсом (2000) в качестве теоретической основы. Исследование выполнено качественными методами и основывается на полуструктурированных интервью с администрацией школы и учителями, а также на анализе официального сайта школы и институциональных документов. Результаты исследования показали, что в школе реализуется гибридная модель, предполагающая интеграцию государственного и международного учебных программ, а также модель двуязычного образования с поздним выходом. Учебная программа также модифицирована за счёт введения дополнительных предметов на английском языке, раннего начала изучения английского языка и увеличения количества учебных часов. Кроме того, результаты свидетельствуют о признании двуязычного обучения, применении междисциплинарного подхода, поощрении сотрудничества между учителями, а также усиленном внимании к благополучию учащихся как на уровне политики, так и в качестве педагогической стратегии. Можно заключить, что переход к ЕМІ на уровне среднего образования требует более системного подхода, возможных изменений в учебной программе по английскому языку, а также усиления институциональной поддержки междисциплинарного взаимодействия. Кроме того, исследование обосновывает необходимость ранней подготовки к ЕМІ через интеграцию языка и предметного содержания силами предметных и языковых учителей, а также постепенного увеличения доли преподавания на английском языке вместо его резкого и полного внедрения.

Ключевые слова: частные школы, переход к ЕМІ, двуязычное образование с поздним выходом, образовательная политика школы, учебно-программные и педагогические адаптации.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the background of the study by describing the role of languages in the educational context in Kazakhstan, particularly the role of English as the medium of instruction (EMI), outlining the milestones of EMI implementation in secondary education. The chapter also presents the statement of the problem, followed by the formulation of the research purpose and of the research questions. The final section discusses the potential significance of the study and the target audience.

Background Information

The Republic of Kazakhstan has a predominantly bilingual population, speaking Kazakh and Russian. Kazakh is the sole national language, and Russian is the second language; however, they are used in a parallel way at governmental institutions and in public space (Smagulova, 2008). These two languages are the main media of instruction (MoI) in all educational sectors.

Secondary education in Kazakhstan, since Soviet time, has been and still is either Kazakh- or Russian-based. In the 1920s, educational policy promoted Kazakh as MoI at school. However, in the late 1930s – 1950s the russification of the educational system took place. The educational reform of 1957 – 1958 gave the choice of the language of instruction to parents, regardless of children's native language, which undermined the positions of Kazakh as higher education was predominantly Russian-based (Smagulova, 2008). After gaining independence, the same principle of parents' choice of MoI was kept, with the difference that teaching the other language as foreign (Kazakh or Russian) became mandatory from primary school.

However, this begs the question: what is the role of English in this Kazakh - Russian dichotomy? Nowadays English is the only foreign language taught at Kazakhstani public schools. It was introduced in the curriculum of most schools after Kazakhstan

became independent in 1991. Officially English became a mandatory subject only in 2021, although, de facto, it had gained popularity much earlier, already in the 1990-s. The idea of EMI emerged in the early 2000-s within the framework of trilingual education, put forward by the former President Nursultan Nazarbayev (Fimyar et al., 2014). The ‘Trinity of Languages’ was formulated as a cultural and educational project where Kazakh was considered as the language of national identity, Russian as the language of interethnic communication and English as the language of integration into the global economy (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018).

Thus, knowledge of English was seen as a tool for the development of human capital, for internationalization, and modernization of education and economy (Fimyar et al., 2014). Initially, trilingual education envisaged teaching humanities in Kazakh and Russian, while STEM subjects in English. The bilingual Kazakh - Russian education is dictated by the socio-historical landscape of Kazakhstan, while teaching STEM in English is a global trend which has been practiced in many countries for several decades (Gilanyi et al., 2023).

Trilingual education, including EMI for STEM, was tested in three networks of public but elite and highly selective schools, accepting gifted students from grade seven: 33 “Daryn” schools, 30 “Bilim-Innovation” schools (BIL), and 20 “Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools” (NIS) until 2017 when it was decided to introduce it in all mainstream schools across the country (Karabassova, 2020).

The idea of trilingual education was reflected in several major state documents, however, it is noticeable that most of these policy documents are general and very broad strategies covering not only trilingual instruction (Karabassova, 2020). The ‘Road Map for Trilingual Education 2015-2020’ (2015) was supposed to be a guideline for the

implementation of the trilingual model, but it did not contain concrete milestones, expected results and criteria (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018; Karabassova, 2020).

Moreover, during the transfer of the trilingual model from selected schools to mainstream schools, the focus of the reform had shifted solely toward teaching in English. “Paradoxically, trilingualism has merely become a synonym of “teaching in English,” and the idea of teaching subjects through Kazakh L2 and Russian L2 was soon forgotten (Karabassova et al., 2020, p. 38).

Analyzing the data of Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Bureau of National Statistics for 2021-2022 it can be concluded that the plan of EMI introduction for STEM was realized in only about a half of public schools across the country (Bureau of National Statistics, n.d; Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, n.d.).

Furthermore, according to Karabassova et al. (2020) President Tokayev decided to go back to teaching in Kazakh and Russian. After intense and rushed actions for integrating EMI for STEM in national curriculum in 2016 - 2018 the reform was suspended, and the current situation is not homogeneous: some public schools continue to teach certain content subjects in English, whereas others have postponed this issue indefinitely (Karabassova, 2020).

The initiative to teach STEM subjects through English at secondary sector was successfully realized only in three networks of selective public schools (NIS, Daryn, BIL) and in some private schools.

The first private schools opened in Kazakhstan only after gaining independence in 1991 and they were the first institutions that provided education services in English (Yakavets, 2014). As Chankseliani (2014) noted, private schools in Kazakhstan developed primarily in response to the declining quality of public education, which created demand for institutions offering higher standards, modern international curricula, better preparation

for higher education, and improved learning conditions. According to Chankseliani (2014) the private sector remains relatively small, is concentrated in urban areas, caters mainly to affluent families, and is closely tied to globalization aspirations. Simultaneously, it is more state regulated than in other post-Soviet countries and is subject to mandatory state licensing (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, n.d). Private schools in Kazakhstan operate within a highly centralized regulatory framework under the Ministry of Education, which oversees policy, licensing, and quality assurance, and requires all schools to comply with state educational standards and curricula (Education Profiles, 2021).

Private secondary sector remains limited but has been rapidly growing for the last two decades. The new governmental reports estimated the increase in number of private schools from 203 in 2020 to 878 schools in 2025 (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2026).

Private schools may combine state curricula with foreign programs, such as International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge Assessment International Education (Education Profiles, 2021). They may use English as sole MoI or implement transition from L1 schooling to EMI at different stages. Private schools shifting between MoIs have developed individual systems of curricular and instructional adaptations aimed at gradual, and smooth EMI transition.

Problem Statement

In Kazakhstan, most primary-level students are native speakers of Kazakh or Russian, and their early exposure to academic English is limited (Kambatyrova, 2024). English is not a part of daily communication in Kazakhstan, therefore, as MoI for complicated content subjects, it becomes a burden for many students, both from language and content acquisition perspectives (Kambatyrova, 2024).

The idea of EMI in secondary sector is postponed but not rejected because it is a mainstream global trend (Gilanyi et al., 2023). Moreover, the number of EMI programs in higher education institutions is growing (Tajik et al., 2022), which requires continuity in the educational process in terms of students' ability to learn content subjects through English.

Nowadays, there is a discrepancy between policy formulation and its practical implementation, underscoring the need to examine how EMI is operationalized within schools and what systemic factors hinder or favor its effective realization (Karabassova, 2018). What is lacking in the EMI policy for secondary schools is the holistic, comprehensive, and interconnected system of curricular decisions, pedagogical methods, and collaborative strategies of school administrators, subject and language teachers. Educators at public schools have limited and fragmented understanding of how to execute the transition from one MoI to another. At this point, EMI transition turns out to be abrupt for all the stakeholders. Even in grade10, students' English proficiency is not high enough for EMI, and teachers do not know how to scaffold them, while school administrators do not provide sufficient support for teachers (Karabassova, 2021). In other words, there is a considerable gap in the state curriculum in terms of preparation for the EMI transition.

NIS and other privileged public networks were supposed to serve as a model for the rest of Kazakhstani state schools (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). However, these schools are selective toward students and richer in resources than mainstream schools.

Private schools also have considerably richer resources and relatively higher levels of students compared to public schools. However, unlike NIS, BIL and Daryn networks, most private schools have the full cycle of instruction: from elementary to high school. These schools start preparing their students from primary school and create comprehensive support systems of curricular and instructional adaptations. Consequently, some of their

methods could be potentially adapted by public schools. Moreover, curriculum developers, content specialists, and methodologists could advance the implementation of EMI for content subjects by aligning general English classes with the linguistic demands of STEM education as it is done in some private schools.

Referring to the experience of many countries with successful EMI at school, often in form of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (Coyle, 2018), this initiative in Kazakhstan is worth being supported and developed. Hence, analyzing any positive experiences, at institutional and classroom levels, may help shape this policy and contribute to its practical implementation.

Research on private secondary sector in Kazakhstan is scarce. A certain gap also exists in studying EMI transition as a systemic approach and a set of curricular and pedagogical adaptations. Previous research in the context of Kazakhstan mostly focused on separate aspects of EMI implementation. There were not many studies displaying EMI transition as a complicated process and as a comprehensive system of interrelated measures that encompass different dimensions.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the system of interconnected curricular and instructional adaptations implemented in a private school to support a gradual and comfortable EMI transition. The researcher aims to study how teachers and curriculum developers in a Kazakhstani private school support Kazakh- and Russian-speaking students in acquiring academic English, subject-specific terminology and communicational skills needed to successfully engage in EMI for content subjects from primary or lower-secondary school and onward. This study will also investigate how educators conceptualize their roles and responsibilities in this multilingual, transitional context. The study will focus on three main research domains: 1) policies and curriculum modifications

supporting EMI transition; 2) STEM and English teachers' strategies and methods to prepare students for EMI; 3) English classes' convergence with STEM subjects and ways of cooperation between language teachers and their subjects colleagues. While the first research area refers to the official policy of a certain school, two other areas are related both to official school guidelines and individual teachers' strategies and initiatives.

By investigating how teachers and curriculum developers support language and content development during the primary and early secondary stages, this study aims to discover individualized strategies and methods implied in private schools that potentially can be extended to broader contexts, including mainstream schools.

Research Questions

To fulfil the purpose, the following research questions have been developed:

1. How do school policies and curriculum adaptations facilitate the development of academic English and support students' transition to English-Medium Instruction (EMI)?
2. In what ways do teachers implement these policies and curricular adaptations to address both language and content learning needs at the primary and lower-secondary levels?
3. How do collaborative practices between language and content teachers support an effective transition to EMI?

Significance of the Study

The relevance of exploring this topic lies in understanding how EMI for content subjects can be implemented in the conditions when students have very limited exposure to English outside school and the transition to EMI takes place relatively late, which is the case of public schools in Kazakhstan. One of the main reasons why EMI policy realization is not very successful is its abruptness. Students having a limited number of general

English classes that are not connected to STEM subjects, start learning complicated content subjects through English suddenly without prior linguistic preparation. Basically, the preparation of students for EMI before actual immersion for some content subjects in terms of curricular and instructional adjustments at public schools is practically nonexistent.

This research is a case-study at a private school practicing gradual EMI transition. The key word here is ‘gradual.’ The main idea consists in starting to prepare students in advance, from elementary school, in various ways: introducing special supporting subjects, incorporating elements of English at science classes taught through L1, aligning topics of science and English classes, and promoting collaboration between language and content teachers. Identifying these means can inform educational policy, curriculum and content development, and teacher training programs. Despite the differences in resources between private and public schools, some activities, curricular modifications and teaching methods could be borrowed and adapted for the public sector.

In addition, the application of CLIL-informed or similar practices in early education remains underexplored even in the private sector. By examining how teachers perceive and implement integrated language-content instruction (explicit or implicit) this research can contribute empirical data to guide future teacher training, curriculum design, and policy decisions. The study may be of use for school administrators and, especially, language and STEM teachers at private and public schools informing on how they could help students prepare for future EMI starting at an early age.

Overall, the study might support the country’s broader goals of fostering multilingual, globally competent graduates and provide practical recommendations for improving early-stage EMI readiness in Kazakhstan’s education system. This research can provide data on pedagogical and curricular strategies aiming to bridge gaps between

language acquisition and subject learning in light of the national trilingual policy. It may support the refinement of EMI practices in Kazakhstan and inform policy decisions aimed at improving trilingual education. This study can also add to broader research on EMI and language scaffolding at the primary level.

Furthermore, this research can contribute to the broader academic discussion on multilingualism, EMI - CLIL dichotomy, and models of bilingual / multilingual education in non-Western contexts, offering some insights specific to Kazakhstan's unique sociocultural landscape.

Above all, the findings of this study could help to shape EMI for STEM curriculum and methodology, making them more up-to-date, flexible, and inclusive, embracing the interests of Kazakhstani students from various backgrounds and to provide practical recommendations for supporting sustainable EMI implementation.

Therefore, the present study might be of interest, above all, for policy makers, school administrators, curriculum and content developers in English and STEM subjects, language and content teachers using EMI.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

EMI is an extremely broad and multi-faceted topic in educational research. This case study represents how one private school implements the transition from mother tongue-based instruction (MTBI) to EMI. Thus, the key concept of this research is transition from one MoI to another, particularly EMI transition.

This chapter reviews some conceptions of EMI transition by top-ranked researchers in the area of multilingual education, such as Cummins (2000), Baker and Wright (2025), Mohanty (2018), including types of EMI transition, associated challenges and pedagogical strategies. Then, the chapter outlines the main themes of the modern research on EMI in Asian contexts. Further, the chapter describes in greater detail the key themes in EMI research in Asia that are applicable to Kazakhstani context, namely policy – practice discrepancy, inefficient and insufficient teacher professional preparation and development, total exclusion of local and indigenous languages from educational paradigms and the domination of English-only pedagogy. The present study briefly summarizes some of the empirical sources critiquing ‘anglonormativity’ (McKinney, 2017) and TESOL orthodoxy (Pennycook, 2001) in different contexts. Next, studies on teachers’ pedagogical strategies and responsive agency to mitigate the transition difficulties are summarized. Finally, a gap in existing research is identified.

Theoretical Framework

Transition from mother tongue to another language for educational purposes can be associated with significant cognitive, linguistic, academic, social and psychological challenges for students and teachers. There are different types of transition from one language to another in education. In the case of Kazakhstan, it is shifting to a global language, English, from languages that are mainstream (Kazakh and Russian).

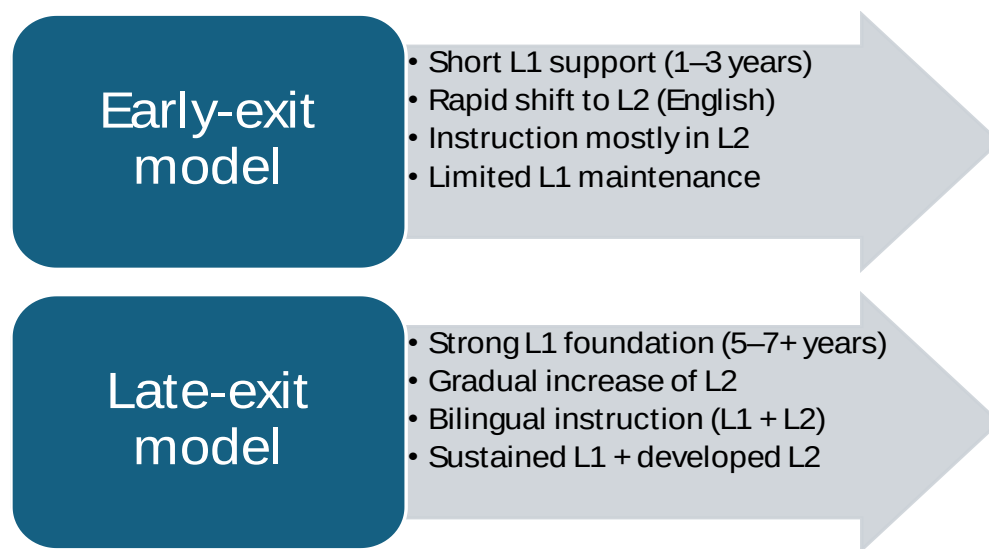
As to the categorization of bilingual (multilingual) education, including EMI, Cummins (2000) proposed the late-exit and early-exit models as two main types of transitional bilingual education. Early-exit transitional model implies receiving some initial instruction in students' first language (L1), then moving into English-only classes as quickly as possible, often within one - three years. In traditional EMI education, it was believed that early transition is beneficial for students' English proficiency and academic achievement. However, Cummins criticized this approach drawing, first, on his differentiation between the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), surface-level fluency in conversational language developed in early childhood, and the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), that is the knowledge of deeper, context-reduced academic language. He also put forward the interdependence hypothesis: L1 and second language (L2) proficiency are interdependent, therefore, a student who has not fully developed proficiency in mother tongue cannot do this in L2 either, because strong L1 is needed to support L2 acquisition and academic achievement. Moreover, according to Cummin's (2000) threshold hypothesis, bilinguals need to reach a proficiency threshold in both languages to avoid cognitive challenges and gain benefits. Thus, early-exit model underestimates the time needed to develop CALP in English. In addition, students' academic, linguistic, and cognitive skills in L1 are underdeveloped, which means they lose the chance to transfer these skills into English. This results in lower long-term academic performance compared to late-exit models.

In late-exit transitional model students are supposed to receive substantial instruction in L1 for five – seven years, or more, before transitioning fully to English. Content areas are initially taught in L1 while English is developed gradually. The ratio of EMI increases over time, but L1 is not abruptly abandoned. Thus, strong literacy and academic skills in L1 can be transferred to L2, supporting success in EMI. At the same

time, students reach higher academic proficiency in English and maintain stronger bilingual skills. According to Cummins (2000) to ensure successful EMI transition, late-exit programs should be prioritized as they prepare students more effectively for EMI by giving a solid academic foundation in L1 and enough time to build CALP in English. In contrast, early-exit programs often lead to premature EMI exposure, where students struggle academically because their CALP is not yet developed.

Figure 1

Early-exit vs. Late-exit Models of Bilingual Transitional Education (Cummins, 2000)



Baker and Wright (2025). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (8th ed.). Multilingual Matters. (2025) also supported Cummins' views on EMI transitional models in bilingual education, challenging the principle 'earlier is always better'. According to the authors, early-exit programs may hinder the development of high proficiency in L1 and often fail to support long-term academic performance while late-exit programs facilitate a more sustained transition and promote additive bilingualism, supporting balanced development of both L1 and L2.

The opposition of early-exit and late exit-transitional models takes on special significance in postcolonial contexts or in societies having complicated multi-level

structure with strong hierarchy of dominant and minority languages. For example, Mohanty (2018) represents critical perspective on multilingual education in the context of India emphasizing that power hierarchies between dominant and minority languages amplify and maintain social and economic inequalities. Mohanty also advocates for late-exit models because they may address systemic inequalities. In contrast, early-exit models may negatively impact speakers of minority languages. Late-exit multilingual education has demonstrated positive results in several minority languages communities in India. Early-exit programs, in contrast, prioritize dominant languages too soon, leading to low academic performance and identity crisis.

Thus, several prominent researchers in multilingual education opt for the late-exit models. Mohanty (2018) underlines, above all, the social justice aspect of mother-tongue-based education, while Cummins (2000) and Baker and Wright (2025) emphasize the cognitive and academic aspects of bilingual programs, promoting late-exit models as beneficial for L1 and L2 proficiency and the development of academic skills.

Boateng (2019) in the report for the Institute of Development Studies also describes also the third phase of transitional bilingual education: very late-exit – L1 for 7 – 8 years or more before transition to EMI. Although the report emphasizes that there is no one universally best model, as local context matters, it underscores the value of L1 mother-tongue-based instruction for the development of learners' cognitive, linguistic and academic skills.

Thus, in Kazakhstan, the educational model practiced in NIS, BIL, Daryn and some private schools and intended to be applied at public schools refers to late-exit or very late-exit transitional bilingual education. Therefore, the thesis will examine how a private school in Kazakhstan implements a late-exit model. Cummins argues that bilingual education needs to be built on the principles of transformative pedagogy. While these

principles are relevant for the contexts where transition is realized from a minority to a dominant language or in societies where EMI is loaded with postcolonial legacy (critical awareness of language power dynamics), other features (dialogic pedagogy, responsive to students' needs and providing extensive scaffolding) are important for effective transition to EMI in educational contexts where English is not the language of daily communication in society, as it is in Kazakhstan.

Review of the Empirical Research on EMI at Secondary School in Asian Contexts

Transition to EMI is not equally researched in different contexts. Empirical EMI research in Asia is still a relatively small but growing field. Gilányi et al. (2023) conducted a large-scale study reviewing empirical research on EMI and CLIL in primary and secondary contexts across Asia, covering publications from 2015 to 2022. The authors concluded that empirical research on EMI/CLIL in the context of Asian schools is still emerging, however, it became more intense after 2018. Moreover, it has uneven geographical coverage. The majority of the published studies come from East and Southeast Asia, with fewer studies from South Asia. The studies from Central Asia are not present in this review. However, many of the main themes and issues outlined in the review are applicable to Kazakhstani context and can be found in the research conducted in Kazakhstan. It is also noteworthy that most studies focus on secondary grades, while primary or early-years research is scarce. This tendency is clearly seen in Kazakhstan too. In addition, the emphasis placed on STEM subjects, where EMI policies are being actively implemented, is evident. This trend is also highly transferable to Kazakhstani context, both concerning education policies and research focus. Many studies investigate CLIL classrooms. Research on CLIL in secondary school context is relatively frequent in Kazakhstan too (Bedeker et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2018; Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023; Mehisto, et al., 2022).

Several recurring themes were revealed by the authors in the analyzed studies. The first important theme is the policy - practice gap. Many countries or schools adopt EMI policy to be in line with the global trends for internationalization and modernization of education through EMI, but stakeholders at micro-level often face challenges due to insufficient preparation of teachers or students, lack of resources, institutional and structural support, which may lead to the mismatch between official policy and teacher practice or negative attitudes to EMI (Graham et al., 2021; Pun, et al., 2022; Sharbawi & Jaidin, 2020).

The second frequent theme refers to teachers, covering their beliefs, competences and professional development. Most studies emphasize the unpreparedness of educators for teaching through English and gaps in teacher professional development programs (Kewara & Prabjandee, 2018; Lo, 2019). However, the examples of teachers' responsive agency resulting in classroom practices, going beyond officially prescribed curricula, can also be noted (Phyak et al., 2022; Tavares, 2015).

The third recurrent theme is language use, classroom interaction and translanguaging. The researchers investigate whether English-only pedagogy, often imposed by official policy, persists in real classrooms, how the exclusive use of English impacts interactional patterns in classrooms, to what extent translanguaging is present in classrooms and what learning outcomes are associated with permitting or restricting the use of local languages. Most studies showcase translanguaging or mixed-language strategies as a response to students' limited English proficiency. Many teachers and students rely on L1 strategically despite monolingual EMI policies (Phyak et al., 2022; Tavares, 2015; Zhou et al., 2021).

However, research on implementation models and transition processes and phases is presented only by few studies. Moreover, it is usually not a central topic but only one of

the aspects being investigated (Mukminin et al., 2019; Pun et al., 2022). Generally, as for the time of transition, the review highlights that many Asian governments are trying to promote earlier adoption of EMI.

The key themes identified in Gilányi et al.'s (2023) review, which are particularly pertinent to the Kazakhstani context, will be explored in greater detail in the following sections, transitioning from broader Asian contexts to EMI research conducted specifically within Kazakhstan.

EMI in the Context of Kazakhstan

In the context of Kazakhstan, we almost always speak about late-exit models or very late-exit models - EMI starting at high school after 8-9 years of native language instruction. Some researchers have noted that transition to EMI at a very late stage of secondary school can also cause significant challenges for students (Lo & Macaro, 2015).

In Kazakhstan, EMI education is a relatively recent phenomenon. The reform introducing EMI at schools and universities is a part of a broader educational policy aiming to modernize the Kazakhstani educational system and to integrate the country into global education, science and economy (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). On the one hand, in Kazakhstan English language does not have colonial legacy and is not associated to postcolonial inequalities as it is, for example, in India (Mohanty, 2018) or Pakistan (Manan et al., 2020; 2024). On the other hand, despite Kazakhstani population's multilingualism, English is not a language of daily communication for any region or social stratum. It is a foreign language that became demanded only after gaining independence in 1991 and mandatory at school even later. Therefore, the tradition of EMI education had not been developed, hence, EMI reform at public schools turned out to be abrupt and ill-prepared. Describing different aspects of the EMI reform in Kazakhstan, researchers have noted that it was a completely top-down policy, neither local actors were consulted at the

stage of the reform conception, nor their needs were addressed at the stage of the reform implementation (Karabassova, 2018; Karabassova, 2020).

Most studies on EMI in Kazakhstan were conducted either at the networks of elite public schools, especially NIS, or at mainstream schools, or compared these two contexts (Karabassova, 2021), whereas research on the EMI at private schools is limited.

Chankseliani (2014) argues that EMI and enhanced English language instruction are one of the main drivers for private schools' enrollment. Tleuov (2025) also suggested that EMI and more individualized approaches to teaching process were the main perceived benefits of private schools.

EMI Policy – Practice Gap in Kazakhstan

Abrupt and forced EMI introduction, or policy-dumping (Kambatyrova 2024; Manan et al., 2024), became one of the central research themes of studies conducted in Kazakhstan as it had led to a serious mismatch between policy planning and implementation and had created significant difficulties for all of the stakeholders. After a short period of active reform promotion, the transition to EMI for STEM subjects at all public schools has been stalled for an indefinite period (Karabassova, 2020). Karabassova analyzed in detail the EMI reform preparation and implementation, including policy documents and guidelines, teacher training programs and EMI application at school level (Karabassova, 2018; 2020; 2021). Implementation of EMI at public secondary schools in a country where the majority of population, including schoolteachers and students, have limited English proficiency requires time, efforts and sustainable well-planned preparation. The attempt at a drastic shift to EMI in most schools was not successful because all the key stakeholders at micro- and meso- levels have faced difficulties and have not received sufficient structural support.

Difficulties in EMI implementation in Kazakhstan mostly align with the findings of studies investigating practical realization of EMI policies in other Asian countries.

Considering that EMI constitutes only one component of Kazakhstan's broader trilingual education policy, Li's (2022) review of Hong Kong's trilingual and biliterate language education policy is of particular relevance. As Hong Kong's policy has been implemented since 1998, it offers a longer period of observation and a richer evidence base, making it a valuable point of comparison for examining the implementation of trilingual education in Kazakhstan. Speaking of the EMI dimension of Hong Kong's policy the author drew the following key conclusions that may be applicable to Kazakhstani context. First, in secondary schooling (age 11-12 upwards) the policy streams students into EMI vs Chinese-medium-of instruction (CMI) based on English proficiency; only a minority go into EMI. Students in EMI and CMI streams may experience divergent trajectories as for language, academic subjects and equity making EMI elitist. However, the EMI stream implies English-only pedagogy with minimal L1 support, though this has been criticized as unrealistic and possibly counterproductive. Second, the late start of EMI (secondary level) may lead to insufficient language acquisition; earlier preparation is preferable. This contradicts the idea of late-exit models benefits. Yet, the monolingual immersion model is also being questioned. Bilingual and/or CLIL models with strategic L1 and L2 use may offer more realistic and effective pathways. The third conclusion concerned teachers, emphasizing that their language proficiency and pedagogic competences are critical for the policy's success

Another evidence of policy – practice gap in EMI implementation in Hong Kong was brought by Pun et al. (2022). In their qualitative study of a school's transition from partial to full EMI in science, they found that inadequate linguistic support during the shift

impeded both academic language development and students' understanding of scientific content.

Hong Kong's policy is not the only one that has been critiqued for limitations in its implementation. For example, Sharbawi and Jaidin (2020) conducted an evaluation of language-in-education policy from macro to micro levels in Brunei with a focus on EMI implications. Their key findings included the mismatch between policy ambition and the real readiness of stakeholders at meso- and micro-levels. Hence, there is only a partial implementation of EMI, similar to the situation in Kazakhstan, as instruction predominantly occurs in the first language (Malay) or through mixed-language practices. Graham et al. (2021) undertook a critical analysis of Taiwan's bilingual education policy, part of the national initiative to establish a "bilingual nation" by 2030, which bears notable similarities to Kazakhstan's trilingual education policy outlined in the Kazakhstan 2030 Strategy. This study identified several challenges, including policy ambiguity, the persistence of monolingual ideologies, tensions between language and content instruction, and potential risks of widening educational inequalities.

In Kazakhstan, researchers, above all, have studied these challenges in EMI policy implementation from the perspective of teachers (Karabassova, 2018; Manan, et al., 2024, Manan & Hajar, 2024; Mehisto et al., 2022). The main issues for teachers are formal, short, and inefficient teacher training, lack of administrative support, lack of appropriate teaching materials, top-down requirements for the full transition to EMI in a very short time. Karabassova (2018) has also noted that key policy documents and guidelines, as well as the content of the professional development programs, did not have a clear conception of EMI models, transitional period, differentiation between EMI and CLIL, pedagogical strategies, and assessment systems that could provide balanced and effective learning of content and language at the same time. Even at elite NIS schools, despite being expected to

take an integrated approach to teaching, teachers viewed “content learning and language learning as separate endeavors” (Karabassova, 2018, p. 794). Moreover, teachers had high expectations for students’ target language proficiency, while English was used purely as MoI, students' language development was not considered as their responsibility.

Parents’ attitudes to EMI have also become the focus of study (Kambatyrova, 2024). Generally, parents support the idea of EMI, seeing the advantages for the future education and career of their children. However, many of them raise concerns because secondary school students are often unprepared for EMI and their low language proficiency can negatively affect the acquisition of content subjects and children’s psychological state.

The least studied opinion is, probably, the one of students themselves. Hajar (2024) has studied the viewpoints, challenges and strategies of students at another selective school network BIL in the context of EMI for content subjects. Most students claimed to not have major challenges, except some issues with science terminology in English, and positively evaluated their experience of EMI at secondary school. However, the situation of students at mainstream schools may be different.

English-Only Pedagogy, L1 Use and Interaction Patterns in EMI Classrooms

One of the challenges of the EMI pedagogy is the total exclusion of native languages from the learning process. English-only pedagogy comprises the tradition to teach English exclusively through English and the prohibition to use any other languages in EMI classrooms, even when there is a clear pedagogical need to do so. This global trend has been critiqued by many authors (McKinney, 2017; Pennycook, 2001; Phillipson, 1992). This problem is especially acute in postcolonial contexts where English remains the language of prestige and English-only schools are seen as a sign of the future social and economic success for graduates. Manan has undertaken the extensive qualitative research

of this phenomenon in several provinces of Pakistan (Manan, 2020; Manan, et al., 2020; Manan & Tul-Kubra, 2022; Manan et al., 2024). Interviews with teachers from elite EMI showed that school policies strictly align with TESOL orthodoxy and monolingual principles: the use of students' L1 is banned from classrooms and even outside classroom environment. This approach leads to 'guilty multilingualism', inferiority syndrome for native/indigenous languages (Manan & Tul-Kubra, 2022; Manan et al., 2024), and prevents teachers from using students' whole linguistic repertoire, and at the same time their cognitive, academic, and cultural skills and competences.

Lo and Macaro (2012; 2015) have studied the dynamics of classroom interaction (teacher - student and student - student) before and after the transition to EMI among Hong Kong secondary and high school students. Their findings demonstrated that often after the full transition to EMI and the exclusion of L1 from the learning process, classroom interaction became less active and natural, more formal, brief, and less meaningful. Sudden transition to EMI without the opportunity to use L1 as scaffolding prevented students from asking questions, expressing opinion and taking part in discussions. In EMI classes teacher talking time increased significantly.

A lot of studies in different Asian contexts, namely Pun and Thomas (2020), Zhou et al. (2021) – Hong Kong, Phyak et al. (2022) – Nepal, promote the positive impact of translanguaging practices in classroom as opposed to strict monolingual norms.

In Kazakhstani context, the English-only policy is not that pronounced, however TESOL orthodoxy exists not only in teaching English as second language but in EMI area too. EMI for STEM subjects at high school was planned as full-immersion programs requiring the minimum use of L1 in classrooms, thus, certain level of pressure of the English-only policy is observable (Bedeker et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2018). As noted by Karabassova (2021) after interviewing mainstream school teachers about mentorship

support for EMI at the initial stage: “[i]n fact, mentors imposed the ‘25-50-75-100%’ framework which envisioned reaching the full English language instruction within one year” (p.564). However, in the reality, due to multilingual background and heterogenous levels of students’ English proficiency, teachers are forced to resort to translanguaging and other ways of scaffolding in Kazakh and Russian (Bedeker et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2018). Pedagogical translanguaging is just one of the manifestations of teachers’ responsive agency in the conditions of restrictive top-down policies.

Teachers’ Strategies and Responsive Agency

Prominent researchers in multilingual education emphasized the crucial role of teachers in bilingual (multilingual) classrooms. Cummins (2000), Mohanty (2017), Baker and Wright (2025) argued that transformative pedagogy and assessment are critically important for transitional bilingual and multilingual education as teachers are the main implementers of any educational policy at meso- and micro-levels.

Teaching strategies often play a crucial role in the challenging environment of EMI transition. Pedagogical translanguaging and strategic L1 use are not the only teacher strategy described by the researchers of EMI in Asian contexts, although linguistic strategies are the most frequent and well-researched. Pun and Thomas (2020), investigating secondary-school science teachers in Hong Kong, defined these solutions as “coping strategies” in response to EMI transition challenges. These strategies include use of L1 and translanguaging; simplification and scaffolding of language and content; interactive and student-centered practices; professional self-development and collaboration. Some of these strategies extend beyond the boundaries of the officially prescribed curriculum and can be characterized as manifestations of teachers’ responsive agency.

More evidence from Hong Kong can be found in Tavares's (2015) paper, employing case study methodology to observe a mathematics EMI classroom with Cantonese-speaking students in a secondary school. The findings confirmed that the strategic use of students' L1 by both teacher and students can enhance L2 interaction (peer talk in English) and comprehension of mathematical content. The study also underscores teacher agency in planning L1 use. Lo and Jeong (2018) explored genre-based pedagogy, and its influence on students' academic literacy in CLIL science classes in Hong Kong. Genre-based pedagogy included explicit teaching of text structure, language features, and communicative purpose through model texts, joint text construction, and independent writing within particular academic genres. This method provided systematic support for students' academic literacy, which resulted in enhancement of both language and content learning.

Not only in the context of Hong Kong have the researchers discovered that teachers are able to demonstrate critical reflexivity, responsive agency and even resistance to restricting institutional and governmental policies. The theme of teachers' agency, opposed to official policies and transforming classroom practices regarding real students' needs, was largely analyzed by Manan in the context of Pakistan (Manan, 2020; Manan, et al., 2020; Manan et al., 2024b). Phyak et al. (2022) argued that fostering spaces for translanguaging within classrooms operating under imposed monolingual policies in Nepal serves not only to intensify both content and language learning, but also to exemplify teacher agency and resistance to dominant monolingual ideologies.

Educators at meso- and micro -levels can also become the driving force for bottom-up reforms and grassroot initiatives. Furthermore, they are able to resist discriminating and detrimental top-down policies and institutional constraints through critical reflexivity. This responsive agency and the creation of ideological and implementational spaces for

transformative pedagogy can play an important role and exercise positive influence in the contexts where conservative ideologies prevail or where top-down policies fail to reach their goals. The latter variant can be observed in Kazakhstan. The government has imposed EMI policy but has not provided appropriate structural support for its implementation. Therefore, many teachers were obliged to find their own strategies to teach through English not compromising the content despite linguistic challenges (Bedeker et al., 2023; Manan & Hajar, 2024; Manan et al., 2024, Montgomery & De Costa, 2024). Students who had EMI experience for STEM subjects at school also noted the essential role of teachers in creating an efficient and positive classroom environment (Hajar, 2024). Teachers find effective teaching methods, for example, intentional use of students' L1 in form of pedagogical translanguaging, often both in Kazakh and Russian. Content teachers constantly try to improve in their level of English in independent way and look for appropriate teaching materials in English on their own (Bedeker et al., 2023; Manan & Hajar, 2024).

Another manifestation of teachers' responsive agency is the collaboration between language and content teachers. Montgomery and De Costa (2024) have analyzed such collaboration in the context of higher education in Kazakhstan. This case study suggested three dimensions of agency through collaboration: pedagogical, sociocultural and relational. Different types of challenges were addressed by specific collaborative strategies. The conclusions and pedagogical implications of this study are applicable not only in HE context but at secondary schools too. "Collaboration is indeed a constructive strategy to help teachers cope with external pressures and develop new practices to meet student needs." (p. 16)

Limited Research on Transition and Transitional Models in Asia and Kazakhstan

Zooming out to the broader Asian context, it becomes evident that research on transitional bilingual education models and EMI transition processes, as well as on systemic approaches to EMI implementation, remains limited. Researchers tend to compare EMI models with L1 or mixed instructional models rather than to analyze early vs. late-exit models. For example, Hennebry and Gao (2018) investigated how MoI (EMI, CMI or mixed) influenced learners' English language learning motivation in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Their study demonstrated that being in an EMI setting is associated with higher levels of some types of English learning motivation. However, the effect of MoI is modest, successful motivation in EMI depends significantly on broader contextual factors. Similarly, Albury studied preferences of students in Malaysia about the MoI for mathematics and science (English vs Malay vs mixed). The research findings showed that Malaysian youth often favored monolingual EMI for reasons of learning efficiency and transition to higher education. However, it is noteworthy that Malaysia has seen several policy shifts regarding MoI in recent years, which is one of the reasons why students opt for MoI policy's consistency.

Also, in the context of Hong Kong, Pun et al. (2022) examined teachers' and students' experiences during a school's shift from partial to full EMI in senior secondary science classes. Their study, however, primarily addressed specific challenges and potential pedagogical solutions, rather than conceptualized the transition as a holistic process involving systemic modifications.

Xiong and Feng (2018) investigated a Sino-Canadian collaborative program in South China applying case study methodology. The authors described the program as a language-driven bilingual (English – Chinese) immersion model. They argue that while the program carries core features of traditional immersion models, it also exhibits context-

specific characteristics, such as hybrid language use, international collaboration, and localization. However, the research focuses primarily on language-driven immersion rather than on EMI preparation.

Similarly, Mukminin et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative case study drawing on semi-structured interviews and document analysis in a private bilingual school in Indonesia, which had adopted English as MoI for content classes. Although this study did not explicitly address transitional processes, its overall focus and methodological orientation align with the aims of the present study, which explores a comparable context in a private school in Kazakhstan.

After analyzing the literature on EMI in the context of Kazakhstan, we can conclude that most studies are dedicated to the challenges faced by actors at meso- and micro levels (above all, teachers) and to the reasons why the reform implementation was stalled in public sector. There are several examples of successful teachers' responsive agency that allow to teach through English in unfavorable conditions. However, there are not many studies demonstrating comprehensive solutions uniting curriculum, teaching methods, and collaboration. The findings derived from this case study conducted in a private school cannot be fully generalized or directly applied to mainstream educational contexts. Nevertheless, they hold relevance given the existing gap in research on EMI transitional models in Kazakhstan.

Summary

Summing up, it might be concluded that research in EMI in Asian contexts is a rapidly growing field. In Kazakhstan scholars focused predominantly on policy – practice gap of the EMI reform and on the challenges and coping strategies of EMI subject teachers at public schools. As for the private sector, studies showed that EMI is one of the main reasons for parental choice of private schools. However, the area of EMI transition and

concrete curricular and instructional adjustments of private institutions are not well-examined.

The following chapter provides a description of the research methodology and the participants of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents an overview of the methodological approach employed in this study. A qualitative research approach has been selected, and the research design is structured as a case study conducted in a single school.

The chapter begins by presenting the qualitative case study design and discussing its suitability for investigating the phenomenon in depth. Then, it describes the research site and sampling strategy, providing justification for their selection. Subsequent sections detail the instruments used for data collection and the procedures followed in collecting, organizing, and storing the data. The data analysis section then outlines the steps taken to examine and interpret the qualitative material.

The chapter concludes with an outline of the ethical measures adopted to ensure the integrity of the research process and the responsible conduct of the study.

Research Design

A qualitative research approach has been chosen for this study. Creswell (2014) emphasizes that qualitative inquiry is the most appropriate approach when researchers aspire “to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4), allowing for investigating certain phenomena through participants’ lived experiences and perspectives. In this case, the central phenomena are the system of curriculum decisions, internal school policy guidelines, and pedagogical strategies used for the effective transition to EMI.

The current study implies an interview-based case study design in a single school, supplemented by document analysis of curriculum texts. As stated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), case study research is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system ... through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews ... and documents and reports)” (p. 37). They note that case

studies are particularly valuable for examining complex educational processes because they allow the researcher to capture holistic and richly descriptive accounts of real-life settings. Similarly, Creswell (2014) highlights that case study methodology is well-suited for situations in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident and must be examined together. In the case of the current study the transitional model and structural adaptations are strongly dependent on the settings of a concrete school.

Semi-structured interviews grant direct access to participants' experiences and enable collection of rich, nuanced, context-dependent data. Concurrently, analysis of curriculum documents can provide structured information on the school guidelines regarding EMI and language-content integration, and outline supplementary subjects and activities facilitating gradual transition.

In summary, the qualitative, interview-based case study design serves several essential purposes. First, it enables the researcher to capture participants' perspectives without imposing predetermined assumptions, theoretical constraints or researcher's positionality (Creswell, 2014). Second, it allows for an in-depth investigation of a bounded system, drawing on multiple data sources to reveal interconnections among elements of the educational context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Third, this research design supports the development of a thick, context-rich description of both policy and practice, illuminating how internal school guidelines and curriculum decisions converge or diverge from classroom strategies.

Research Site

The study was conducted in a private school in Astana that enrolls students in both Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking streams, introduces elements of EMI at the primary level, and gradually transitions to full EMI for STEM subjects by upper-secondary

school. This structure is not unique, however it contrasts with many other public or private educational models in the country, where English may serve as the sole MoI throughout all grades, or, conversely, where EMI for content subjects is introduced only at the end of secondary school or at high-school level. In other words, these school types represent either early-exit transitional models or very late-exit models, while the present research focuses on a late-exit model with a gradual transition (Cummins, 2000), in which the school intentionally constructs a comprehensive system to support a smooth and pedagogically coherent shift to EMI.

Astana, as the capital and a major educational hub, hosts the highest concentration of private EMI schools implementing a range of bilingual and multilingual models. This diversity of instructional approaches provides a suitable setting for identifying an institution that employs a structured, staged transition from L1-medium instruction to EMI. For the purposes of this study, the selected school was required to offer a complete educational cycle from Grade 1 to Grade 11 and to maintain a coherent system of gradual transition supported by scaffolding measures, additional subjects, and internal policies aimed at minimizing linguistic and academic disruption for students.

Expanding on the suitability of the site, Creswell (2014) underscores that qualitative case studies demand research settings where “a case can be clearly bounded” and where researchers can study “current, real-life cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time” (p. 98). A school with a full-cycle, systematized EMI transition model, thus, provides a bounded and information-rich environment for examining how curriculum decisions, policy guidelines, and pedagogical strategies interact over time. The chosen school aligns with this principle because it offers a combination of bilingual streams, staged EMI implementation, and institution-specific curriculum adaptations.

Moreover, the school's distinctive model enabled the exploration of transition processes that occur not only at the classroom level but also at the institutional and curricular levels. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize that case studies are most effective when the case represents a complex functioning unit, which allows for the examination of interconnected elements rather than isolated practices. In this study, the school's internal system constitutes such a functioning unit, making it a compelling site for in-depth qualitative inquiry.

Sampling Strategy

This study focuses on a single school; therefore, all the participants were employees of the same school. The overall number of participants was seven (Table 1). The case study design implied interviewing school employees having different positions related to EMI transition. Thus, for the current study, two representatives of school administration (having also teaching positions in EMI classes), three content teachers implementing full or partial EMI teaching, and, finally, two English teachers working in collaboration with subject teachers and having convergence of the content of their classes with subject classes, were interviewed. The participating teachers worked at primary and secondary school and taught students before or immediately after full transition to EMI.

A purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was utilized to recruit participants who could provide relevant and comprehensive insights into the school's transition to EMI from different perspectives. The interviewees were selected due to their roles enabling them either to present curriculum decisions and school policies, or to exercise instructional practices central to the transition process. This criterion-based purposive sampling aimed at selecting participants meeting the essential criterion of active involvement in EMI implementation in different roles within a single bounded case.

Thus, there were three key criteria for participants' selection: 1) currently working at the chosen school; 2) teaching at primary and / or lower-secondary school before the full transition to EMI, or at secondary school shortly after EMI-transition; 3) being actively involved in EMI implementation, curriculum development and / or teaching in English. For school administrators this meant being in charge of the academic part of school management and / or curricular adjustments, for content teachers - to teach any content subject through English / partially through English, while for English teachers - to have certain alignment of their classes syllabi with EMI content subjects and / or having collaboration with their subject colleagues.

Participants were initially approached through school administration. One of the administration representatives served both as an interviewee, providing data on curriculum and EMI policies, and a gatekeeper giving permission to do research in the selected school and sharing the list of teachers who met the stated criteria with their e-mail addresses. A recruitment letter was sent to all the teachers meeting the criteria. Those who agreed to participate were provided with an informed consent form and were invited to an individual in-person interview outside school settings or online via platform upon participant's request.

Gaining access to participants through a gatekeeper is a rather widespread practice in qualitative research, allowing researchers to facilitate data collection and helping to approach appropriate participants meeting the criterion-based sampling criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The gatekeeper only provided the list of potential participants. As an interviewee he also shared his experience in EMI transition management and curricular adaptations. The list of actual interviewees who agreed to take part in the research was not shared with the school administration and further communication with the participants was developed independently outside school settings to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Table 1***Participants' Characteristics***

Name	Professional position	Overall experience in education (years)	Experience in the school in question (years)	Teaching grades
Kanat	Vice principal for academic Affairs	18	2,5	Primary grades
Azamat	Vice Principal for Cambridge program	10	3,5	6
Tamerlan	Finnish mathematics and English teacher	11	3,5	Primary grades
Adiya	Chemistry, primary science and space science teacher	5	0,5	Primary, 7, 8
Marlen	Physics teacher, head of science department	6	0,5	10, 11
Sabina	English teacher	3,5	2,5	3
Yerlan	English teacher	4,5	2,5	2, 3

Research Instruments***Semi-Structured Interviews***

The main data collection instrument that was applied in this study is semi-structured individual interviews. This type of interview permits scholars to make ongoing adjustments to the protocol questions in accordance with the participants' answers to avoid repetitions, to make clarifications, and to ask additional questions. Moreover, one-to-one interviews are often more comfortable for the participants, creating a supportive and relaxing environment. Three differentiated interview protocols were used regarding the participants' position at school (administrator, content teacher, English teacher). The questions in each of the three interview protocols were tailored and adjusted to elicit and capture all aspects of the EMI phenomenon regarding the participant's role in the EMI

transition process. The interviews comprised open-ended questions that allowed the participants to share their insights and perspectives freely.

Document Analysis

The second source of data was the analysis of the official school website and curriculum-related documents provided by a representative of the school administration. Document analysis served as an important complementary procedure within the embedded case study design, allowing the researcher to observe how different components of the school's system interact within the same institutional context. As Creswell (2014) notes, documents offer researchers "a rich source of information" (p. 245), making them a valuable tool for understanding institutional structures, policy decisions, and pedagogical orientations.

In this study, document analysis enabled the researcher to gain a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the measures implemented to support a gradual transition to EMI. By examining the school's self-positioning in the official website and school charter it became possible to compare officially stated guidelines with the practices reported by participants during interviews. This comparison provided insights into the coherence, or potential divergence, between the school's intended curriculum and its enacted classroom practices.

The documents examined included the school charter and two curricular documents: Algebra Calendar-Thematic Plan (Syllabus), Grade 7, 2025–2026 academic year and Hybrid Long-Term Plan (LTP) - Mathematics Stage 8 (Cambridge + Kazakhstan), Grade 7. Additionally, the information from the official school website covering the following sections: mission and values, policies and rules, partners, educational programs (positive pedagogy grades 1-4; Cambridge grades 5-11; center of supplementary education), news and events were analyzed. These texts were reviewed to

identify internal school policies, curricular modifications and adaptations designed to facilitate the phased transition to EMI, explicit guidelines for language-content integration, and prescribed teaching approaches. Through this process, document analysis contributed to a deeper contextual understanding of the school's holistic system of EMI transition, complementing and reinforcing the qualitative data gathered from interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving ethical approval from the NU GSE research committee, the data collection process was started. First, the final consent of the administration of the selected school was ensured through delivery of an official letter to the gatekeeper. School administration was not expected to recruit their employees for research using administrative pressure but was expected to permit the researcher to approach them individually through a recruitment letter. Then, the gatekeeper was also expected to share some curricular texts and to become the first interviewee.

The participation was voluntary. The interviews were conducted offline or online depending on the participants' convenience. The consent form in paper was handed personally to all the participants who agreed to offline interviews and sent by e-mail to the participants of the online interviews before the start of the interviewing process. The informed consent form was available in three languages. It outlined the voluntary participation, the research purposes, potential benefits and risks, the role of the participants and the measures aimed at guaranteeing their anonymity and confidentiality and the safety of the collected data. The informed consent was signed in two copies in a selected language. One copy was collected by the researcher; the other copy was handed to the participant.

The data collection took place in January 2026. Each interview lasted from 30 to 40 minutes. An interview protocol with the prepared set of questions was given in advance

at the participants' request in one of the three languages according to their choice. However, the interviews themselves were conducted in Russian upon participants' request. The participants were informed about the impossibility of being interviewed in Kazakh and could withdraw at any time. The interviews were conducted in person or online via ZOOM or Google Meet at the participant's request.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed an interpretive process appropriate for a qualitative case study exploring how EMI transition is being implemented through curricular and instructional adaptations. Interview transcripts and curricular documents were prepared and organized in a single analytic dataset. All interviews were transcribed, translated to English, and reviewed for accuracy, while key documents, were read closely to establish familiarity. In line with Creswell (2014), the first stage involved repeated readings of all materials to gain an overall sense of teachers' perspectives and structural adaptations.

Coding followed a fully inductive, data-driven approach. Rather than applying predetermined categories, codes were generated directly from teachers' narratives and the content of curricular documents. Through repeated readings, meaningful segments of text were identified and labelled with descriptive codes that captured emerging ideas related to EMI implementation.

Two complementary forms of inductive coding were employed. First, descriptive coding was used to summarize the basic topics of participants' responses in concise labels. Second, in-vivo coding was applied to capture participants' own words, preserving their linguistic expressions and ensuring that the analysis remained closely grounded in their perspectives. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, in-vivo codes help maintain the participants' voice and highlight the meanings they attach to their experiences. Together,

these coding strategies supported a nuanced and participant-centered interpretation of the data.

Consistent with Creswell (2014) recommendations, coding proceeded in several iterative cycles, moving from initial descriptive labels to more interpretive and analytical coding as patterns became clearer across the dataset. All transcripts and documents were coded manually to allow for close engagement with participants' meanings and to ensure that themes developed organically from the data rather than from prior assumptions or frameworks (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Coding Process: Initial Coding in Interview Transcripts

we signed an agreement with Cambridge, so we will now have Cambridge Primary. The first cohort for Cambridge Primary will graduate in 2030. This means that the current first graders, when they complete grade five, are expected to take an External Assessment, a Cambridge-based External Assessment. **We do not touch grades 1 and 2. Why? Because we want them to learn to speak freely in Kazakh or Russian, whichever is the language of instruction. From grade three we will have Cambridge Primary. Grades 3, 4, 5 are Cambridge Primary. Grades 6, 7, 8 are Lower Secondary Cambridge. Grades 9 and 10 are IGCSE. Grade 11 is AS. And grade 12 is A-Level. That's how it is organized. Grades 3, 4, and 5 have not been introduced yet, but we expect that from next year they will also study in a hybrid format, covering both the state standard and the Cambridge standard. In grades 6, 7, and 8 there is currently a complete review of the curriculum to ensure our students do not fall behind the state program. So, it is the state standard plus elements of Cambridge. We aim for some level of overlap, and we are creating our own program similar to the NIS program. We have already begun this work, and I think by September we will have some results.** IGCSE starts in grade 9. But in grade 9 we cannot fully switch to IGCSE in mathematics. Only in mathematics. All other subjects are already fully taught in English. In mathematics we follow the state curriculum and prepare students for the state exam. In grade 10 we fully switch to English. I'm speaking specifically about mathematics. All other subjects from grade nine, that is, the IGCSE subjects, are taught in English.

- **Completely?**
- **Completely. Then the 11th grade is AS Level. Since the AS Level program is quite extensive, and in one year we must deliver a very large amount of material to students, when they enter the 11th grade we have to abandon the state curriculum. To compare: in IGCSE one textbook is meant for two years, while in AS Level we must complete two textbooks in one year. The workload is heavy, and therefore we cannot combine it with the state program.**
- **Starting from the 10th grade?**
- **From the 11th. The 11th grade is AS Level, and students take an external exam. In the 12th grade they do A Level. In the 12th grade, students are already certified and attend only the subjects they choose.**
- **For taking the UNT later?**

No, by that time they have already taken the UNT. Those who plan to enter local universities leave with the A Level

Кодированные сегменты (Справа):

- Kseniia Zhuikova ... Combining state educational standards and Cambridge program
- Kseniia Zhuikova ... Combining state educational standards and Cambridge program
- Kseniia Zhuikova ... Impossibility to apply English-only pedagogy
- Ксения Ксения Жуйкова ... Hybrid teaching
- Kseniia Zhuikova ... Initial instruction in L1 is essential

After initial coding, related codes were clustered into broader categories and then refined into themes using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis procedures (Figure 3). Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they represented coherent patterns related to school policies, curricular adjustments and teaching strategies. Document analysis followed the same analytic logic, with particular attention given to the alignment between prescribed curricula and pedagogical practices described by teachers.

Figure 3***Coding Process: Refining Codes to Themes***

Participant	Quotes	Codes	Themes
Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge program	1. Informatics itself is essentially in English. The teaching is mixed Russian English, but the textbooks and materials are all in English. And we also have Business Studies, where the textbooks are in English as well. The teacher uses about a 50-50 split between Russian and English. But all terminology is already given in English. 2. We do not touch grades 1 and 2. Why? Because we want them to learn to speak freely in Kazakh or Russian, whichever is the language of instruction. 3. When they told me I had to teach in English, I thought I would do it the same way as in Bangkok, but it did not work because the students did not understand. Now it seems that this barrier has already been overcome: even when textbooks are in English, the students no longer experience that initial shock. In the first year when I started here, they were only just beginning, so there were challenges like: "This is mathematics, and now also in English," questions of that sort were common, 4. Pure English for us starts at IGCSE. Before that everything is hybrid. Other subjects, let's say biology, physics, chemistry, all their materials are in English. As I mentioned, mathematics is the only exception: we have one textbook in Russian, then we switch to another textbook in English. We can't simply drop the Russian one. Other subjects can, because after Grade 9, students choose English for their state exam. 5. From grade three we will have Cambridge Primary. Grades 3, 4, 5 are Cambridge Primary. Grades 6, 7, 8 are Lower Secondary Cambridge. Grades 9 and 10 are IGCSE. Grade 11 is AS. And grade 12 is A-Level. That's how it is organized. Grades 3, 4, and 5 have not been introduced yet, but we expect that from next year they will also study in a hybrid format, covering both the state standard and the Cambridge standard. In grades 6, 7, and 8 there is currently a complete review of the curriculum to ensure our students do not fall behind the state program. So, it is the state standard plus elements of Cambridge. 6. We aim for some level of overlap, and we are creating our own program, similar to the NIS program. We have already begun this work, and I think by September we will have some results.	1. Hybrid language model; Mixed L1 and English instruction. 2. L1 instruction for the first 2 years. 3. Gradual introduction of English throughout primary and secondary stages. 4. Pure English teaching only from grade 8 (10 for maths). 5. Hybrid curriculum model: combining state standards and Cambridge International Program. 6. Final educational model and original school curriculum are still in process. 7. Additional subjects outside state curriculum; taught in English or partly in English.	1. Double hybrid model: curriculum + Mols. 2. Late-exit model. 3. Final model in progress. 4. Bilingual teaching. 5. Additional subjects in English. 6. Orientation for university studies abroad.

Triangulation played a central role in establishing trustworthiness of the analysis.

Insights from teacher interviews were systematically compared with findings from the document review to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and reinforcement. This cross-checking process, recommended by Creswell (2014), strengthened the credibility of interpretations and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of EMI transition at the school.

Ethical Considerations

All the necessary measures to ensure the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of their contributions to the research were taken before, during and after data collection through interviews.

In accordance with Creswell's (2014) recommendations for ethical qualitative inquiry, a written informed consent form was provided to each participant before any interview questions were asked. Informed consent forms clearly outlined the research objectives, data storage and usage procedures, and participants' rights, including the right

to withdraw at any stage and the option to decline any questions. In addition to obtaining written informed consent, verbal consent for audio recordings was sought at the time of the interviews.

To preserve anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and consistently used in reports and presentations of findings. No identifiable information was disclosed, ensuring that participants' identities remain fully protected throughout the study. The name of the school does not appear anywhere in the text of the thesis or related documents to additionally protect the participants' anonymity. Recruitment materials, consent forms, and research instruments were designed to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. The identifiable details collected were only the names of participants, their position at school and the name of the school. After anonymizing the participants through pseudonyms and deleting the name of the school from the interview protocols and all research related documents, the identification of the participants exclusively through their professional position became highly unlikely.

Participants' personal information was treated with the highest level of confidentiality at all stages of the research. All transcripts, recordings, and other documents containing interview data were securely stored in encrypted, password-protected files, accessible only to authorized individuals, namely myself and my supervisor. Furthermore, all interactions with participants, including data collection and communication, were developed in safe spaces outside school settings or through secure online channels (personal e-mails, ZOOM and Google Meet online platforms) to safeguard their confidentiality.

Participants were also informed that their data would be used exclusively for research purposes and would not be shared with third parties. Personal and identifiable

information would not be publicly disclosed under any circumstances, including the use of AI tools.

For long-term protection of confidentiality, all data in digital and paper formats are retained securely for three years after the completion of data collection, allowing sufficient time for the dissemination of findings while safeguarding participants' privacy.

Participants were also reminded of their ongoing right to withdraw, in which case their data being permanently deleted upon request.

The current study represents no more than minimal risk since all the participants are over the age of 18. Moreover, the research questions and interview questions concern exclusively the participants' professional activity and are not related to their personal lives. The recruitment of the participants through a gatekeeper having a management position in the school structure guaranteed the general approval of the school administration to do research on the designated topic in the selected school, while recruitment process via individual invitation letters and data collection through one-to-one interviews outside school settings or online, insured anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Therefore, interviews did not pose risks to the participants' employment and career advancement.

The consent form clarified that participants were under no obligation to answer questions that caused discomfort and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative repercussions. Participants were also given the choice to take a break, postpone the interview, or skip particular questions. These safeguarding measures were intended to ensure a respectful and secure environment, allowing participants to express their views and experiences without fear of pressure or unwanted disclosure.

The current study did not provide immediate benefits to the participants besides an opportunity for self-reflection. This research can provide data on pedagogical and

curricular strategies aiming to bridge gaps between language and subject learning in light of the national trilingual policy. It may support the refinement of EMI practices in Kazakhstan and inform policy decisions aimed at improving trilingual education. This study can also add to broader research on EMI in STEM and language scaffolding at the primary level.

Overall, the study might support the country's goals of fostering multilingual, globally competent graduates and provide practical recommendations for improving early-stage EMI readiness in Kazakhstan's education system.

Summary

In sum, this chapter has outlined the qualitative case study design used to investigate how EMI transition is enacted within a single school through curricular and instructional adaptations. By combining semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators and a systematic analysis of curricular documents, the study tried to capture the interconnectedness of EMI implementation in context. The data collection and inductive analytic procedures, grounded in established qualitative methodologies, were designed to interpret participants' perspectives while enabling triangulation across data types. The following chapter presents the findings that emerged from this process.

Chapter 4: Findings

The aim of this research is to investigate and analyze how school policies, curricular and instructional modifications contribute to successful EMI transition in case of a full-cycle private school located in Astana. The present study employed qualitative research design, drawing on semi-structured in-person interviews and document analysis as data collection methods. School personnel of diverse professional roles, but all directly involved in the EMI transition, participated in the interviews. The sample included two administrative staff members, three STEM teachers delivering instruction in English or bilingually, and two English language teachers. Furthermore, to investigate school policies and curricular adaptations, relevant information was retrieved from the school's official website and curriculum documents were requested from the school administration.

In this chapter, the findings derived from the collected data are presented in a synthesized, paraphrased form, supported by references to participants' accounts and relevant documentary sources. During the data analysis, the findings were organized in relation to the three RQs. The first section therefore outlines the school's overarching mission, goals, and policies concerning EMI. The second section examines how content and language teachers interpret and enact these policies, their pedagogical strategies and challenges. Finally, the third section investigates the forms of collaboration that exist between content and language teachers and the extent to which the administration supports the cross-curriculum approach.

School Policies and Curricular Adaptations

The following section represents themes identified in relation to RQ1: How do school policies and curricular adaptations facilitate the development of academic English and support students' transition to English-Medium Instruction (EMI)?

This part draws primarily on interview data collected from school administrators, supplemented by insights from teachers. It additionally incorporates information obtained from the official school website, the school charter, and two curricular documents: Algebra Calendar-Thematic Plan (Syllabus), Grade 7, 2025–2026 academic year and Hybrid Long-Term Plan (LTP) - Mathematics Stage 8 (Cambridge + Kazakhstan), Grade 7.

Hybrid Educational Model

The primary characteristic of the school under examination is its hybrid educational model. Although the term “hybrid” is not used on the school’s official website to describe its program, the term was explicitly employed by one of the school administrators during the interview and appears in the title of one of the analyzed documents, indicating the integration of two distinct educational standards, state curriculum of Kazakhstan and International Cambridge Assessment Program.

The hybridity of this model lies in two dimensions. First, in terms of content, the school curriculum combines state educational standards and Cambridge international program. The primary school and grade 5 of lower secondary stage are based predominantly on the state curriculum. Elementary school also embraces elements of Finnish educational approach, namely the positive pedagogy, emphasizing children’s wellbeing, teacher – student collaboration and mutual respect, as well as the development of students’ independence, higher order thinking skills and spirit of inquiry. According to the interview responses of the deputy principal for the Cambridge program, elements of Cambridge Primary are also being introduced for certain subjects (science, digital literacy) from grade 3 and will cover grades 3, 4, 5. However, from the next academic year, full-fledged Cambridge Primary program will be integrated into state curriculum in grades 3 – 5, and a corresponding agreement with Cambridge Assessment International Education has

been recently signed. Moreover, the cross-curriculum approach is also outlined by the official school website as one of the core principles at primary school.

The next stage Cambridge Lower Secondary program starts in grade 6 and covers three years (grades 6, 7, and 8). Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) is employed for the subsequent two years (grades 9 and 10). The full educational cycle is completed by Cambridge AS Level in grade 11 and optional grade 12 with Cambridge A Level Program. Integration with state curriculum is kept until grade 11 to enable UNT passing, while grade 12 is designed as foundation year for those applying for university studies abroad.

Extract 1:

So, it is the state standard plus elements of Cambridge (Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge program).

It is important to mention that integration with Cambridge program is implemented not for all subjects but predominantly for STEM subjects (biology, physics, chemistry, computer science and mathematics), global perspectives (from grade 6) and business studies (from grade 7). Subjects such as literature, geography, history, art, music and PE are taught according to state curricula and in the L1, across all school stages.

Thus, the adopted educational model is hybrid not only in terms of curricula but also in terms of language of instruction. It implies gradual transition from students' L1 to English. The model is called bilingual as the instruction persists in a mixed way (L1 + English) in different proportions for different subjects for several years. Since school enrollment in grade 1, parents choose the L1 of instruction for their children. The chosen language remains the only MoI for grades 1 and 2. As Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge Program, emphasized:

Extract 2:

We do not touch grades 1 and 2. Why? Because we want them to learn to speak freely in Kazakh or Russian, whichever is the language of instruction.

In fact, there are elements of bilingual teaching even in grades 1 and 2, which are represented by the classes of Finnish mathematics having online platform in English, and limited introduction of English key terms in science and space - science.

However, the real introduction of mixed-language teaching starts in grade 3, when bilingual instruction becomes compulsory for science, space science, digital literacy and Finnish mathematics. As Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge Program, underlined:

Extract 3:

Therefore, in primary school we use a bilingual approach. In Grades 5 - 6 we also keep bilingual instruction for this reason.

Bilingual instruction with gradual increase in the percentage of English and of the number of subjects taught in mixed-language mode is officially accepted as the main educational model and formally continues until grade 8. Grade 8, the third year of Cambridge Lower Secondary program, is defined as a threshold for the final transition to teaching in English for designated subjects. As Kanat, vice principal for academic affairs, claimed:

Extract 4:

But in Grade 8, 100% instruction in English becomes mandatory for certain subjects, for example, algebra must be taught in English. They also have computer science, which must also be taught in English. And physics, chemistry, biology, these subjects are fully in English, with no exceptions and no bilingual instruction.

Mathematics, in a way, is an exception until grade 9. It must cover both state curriculum and Cambridge program because of the state exam, which is compulsory after grade 9 and is taken in L1. For this reason, mathematics teachers continue to use

Kazakhstani textbooks and partly teach in L1. Thus, mathematics in grade 9 is taught not bilingually but interchangeably: state curriculum in L1, Cambridge program in English.

The document analysis of Algebra Calendar-Thematic Plans demonstrated that there is a very developed and detailed system of integrating state curriculum and Cambridge program, depending on the degree of alignment and overlapping of the two programs. The integration may be fulfilled by complementing Cambridge with state curriculum components or vice versa. For example, algebra, which is more advanced in the state program, can be complemented with Cambridge components for statistics (as the latter is more extensive in Cambridge). The balance between elements of state curriculum in L1 and of Cambridge program in English is aimed.

Therefore, full transition to EMI for STEM subjects officially occurs in grade 8, while for mathematics in grade 10. However, given a certain number of subjects taught in L1, the school educational model is bilingual throughout the whole cycle.

Additional Subjects Taught in English or Bilingually and Early Start of English

Language Classes

As mentioned above, the school has a range of additional subjects not included in Kazakhstan's state curriculum, such as Finnish mathematics, a gamified course based on a special anglophone online platform *Eduten*, developed by the University of Turku, which integrates mathematics and English from grade 1.

The second original element of school's curriculum is space science (astronomy). Children who enrolled in 2023 started to learn this subject in Grade 3 in bilingual mode, while the subsequent generations have it from grade 1, initially with a few elements of English terminology, which is gradually increased to bilingual teaching in grade 3 and to EMI from grade 7.

Alongside, Cambridge programs and EMI or partial EMI in science, mathematics and computer classes, complementary Cambridge subjects such as global perspectives (from grade 6) and business studies (from grade 7) also enrich the school's curriculum. Therefore, there is an increase in the proportion of EMI in almost every subsequent grade along with new subjects, which are initially taught bilingually and, eventually, solely in English.

Another innovation compared to state standard is the early start of English classes and increased number of lessons per week. At Kazakhstani public schools, English classes start in grade 3 with three hours per week. This number of classes remains the same until the end of school. Meanwhile, in the school, where this study was conducted, English begins in grade 1 with four regular classes and one hour per week designated for English homework. The following year, the number of regular classes reaches five and the total number of six classes per week stays intact until the end of school.

Moreover, the school hires native speakers to complement regular English classes at high school. Native speakers organize speaking clubs, offer individual consultations for higher grades, or extracurricular activities for all students.

Special attention given to language classes is evident in the planned level of English proficiency expected to be achieved by students by the time of EMI transition, i.e. Grades 7 - 8. Both English teachers, who participated in the study, indicated: B2 as desired level, while B1 as minimum threshold.

Final Transitional Model and Original School Curriculum in Progress

The necessity to combine state curriculum and Cambridge program, as well as the challenges of transition from native language to EMI, make it difficult to finalize the transitional bilingual educational model and complete the development of school's original hybrid curriculum. According to the official website this school was certified as

Cambridge International School in 2023. Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge program, also shared that in 2026, a new agreement was signed with Cambridge Assessment, concerning the increase of Cambridge elements at the elementary stage (Cambridge Primary).

Currently, students enrolled in the school in different years have differences concerning the introduction of bilingual subjects (for example, space science is now taught from grade 1, before it was taught only from grade 3) and the threshold of full EMI transition may vary. Moreover, students' unequal level of English proficiency, as they come from schools with less advanced English, prevents the total rejection of bilingual teaching, often until grade 10. Furthermore, as mentioned above, mandatory state exam in mathematics after grade 9, conducted in Kazakh or Russian and assessing students according to state educational standards, dictates the preservation of bilingual teaching and hybrid curriculum in mathematics until grade 9. The complexity of combination of all these features has led to the situation where the final educational model and school's individual curriculum are still in the process of development. Azamat, vice principal for the Cambridge program, explained:

Extract 5:

So, it is the state standard plus elements of Cambridge. We aim for some level of overlap, and we are creating our own program, similar to the NIS program. We have already begun this work, and I think by September we will have some results.

By the beginning of the next academic year, the school administration also expects to finalize the main curricular document, describing the transition from L1 instruction to bilingual teaching, then to full-fledged EMI and hybrid curriculum embracing Kazakhstan's state standards and Cambridge program. At present, the bilingual model and

mixed curriculum are reflected in separate documents: subject syllabi, Cambridge guidelines, methodological recommendations, calendar plans etc.

Kanat, vice principal for academic affairs, acknowledged that the process of designing original hybrid school curriculum, despite being at the final stage, still requires adjustments.

Cross-Curriculum Approach

The official school website emphasizes cross-curriculum approach that is employed at primary school aiming at comprehensive development and more efficient knowledge acquisition among young students. English teachers witnessed that English textbooks applied at early grades, Oxford Discover, are designed in accordance with CLIL principles and have considerable thematic overlap with various subjects. Administrators and teachers talked about different ways of interdisciplinary collaboration. This data will be presented in detail in section three answering RQ3.

Preparing Students for University Studies Abroad

International Cambridge Assessment program was designed to enable school graduates from all over the world to be admitted to EMI universities. This school sees the preparation of students for university studies abroad as one of its key missions. Hence, there is an opportunity to stay for grade 12, as foundation year for future higher education. Moreover, the school has a special department of admissions and career advising. Admission coordinators collect information on universities across the globe, make presentations for pupils and parents, and provide high school students with consultations regarding their admission prospects, based on individual learning profiles. This so-called ‘professional orientation’ is conducted since primary school; however, it is intensified at high school to ensure objective evaluation of students’ achievements and select congruent

options for university applications, considering the possibility to receive state grants. As Kanat, vice principal for academic affairs, argued:

Extract 6:

The most important thing is that we have a career guidance specialist. Right now, we're doing a lot of work to show students and parents which universities exist, and that English is essential for admission, there is no way around it.

The school charter defines the institution's general mission as "preparing open-minded and curious graduates sensitive to global issues and ready to contribute to the country's development and changing the world for the best" (p. 1). It indicates global thinking among key values. As articulated by Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge program:

Extract 7:

Overall, if you look at our school's mission, it's to raise a student who will feel at home anywhere. In the U.S., in the U.K., in any English-speaking environment, our children shouldn't feel lost.

Attention to Teachers' Role, Qualifications and Professional Development

The school explicitly emphasizes the essential role of teachers in the whole educational process and, especially, in the EMI transition, hence the increased attention to teachers' qualifications, skills and personal qualities.

Kanat, vice principal for academic affairs, believes that teachers' readiness and initiatives in the process of EMI transition are critically important for its successful implementation:

Extract 8:

I would emphasize the teacher. No matter how it sounds, I truly believe that if a teacher wants to transition to EMI, they will be able to implement what they planned.

For this reason, the school has a rigorous hiring policy: subject test, then a demo lesson conducted in English. As shared by one of the participants, Marlen, physics teacher and head of science department, the main challenge in the EMI transition in Kazakhstan is the lack of subject teachers able to properly deliver content through English. He pointed out that in his department most teachers graduated from universities abroad or Nazarbayev University. Among teachers and administrators who participated in the interviews, some received education in English or were retrained as EMI teachers, others worked abroad or in other EMI private schools. Alongside pre-service training and additional professional development completed at other institutions, both administrators and teachers emphasized that the school regularly provides supplementary training to its employees in various formats: online training to master Cambridge program and Finnish mathematics, school-based offline seminars, regular weekly professional development sessions, retraining in external organizations, like ORLEU, Center for Pedagogical Excellence. The most important retraining is the acquaintance with Cambridge program, which is mandatory for new teachers. As explained by Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge program:

Extract 9:

These are actual courses provided by Cambridge. They're online courses, for two or three weeks. After completing them, teachers receive a certificate of completion.

Tamerlan, Finnish mathematics teacher, came to school as English teacher but was retrained by representatives of Turku University at the school's expense to become Finnish mathematics instructor and currently teaches both English and this subject.

All the participants also emphasized that every Wednesday they have professional development seminar for the whole staff that is conducted in various forms: internal trainings, guest lectures, departmental meetings etc.

Alongside professional development, there is also a system of teacher motivation, for example, internal competition for the award of the best teacher with material rewards.

It is noteworthy that the official conceptualization of English teachers as key agents of EMI transition is conveyed to individual instructors; teachers also evaluate their role as substantial and not limited to teaching language as an isolated subject. Sabina, an English teacher, noted that recognizing language teachers as essential contributors to the EMI transition is a core institutional principle actively promoted among staff:

Extract 10:

I believe that in general English teachers play a key role in the transition to full English-medium education. We serve, so to speak, as a bridge whose task is to help students not only speak English but also understand other subjects taught in English.

Institutional Support for Teachers Aimed at EMI Transition

School-based professional development is not the sole type of institutional support provided by the school to its teachers in EMI transition process.

Above all, the participants outlined providing access to technology, as well as to paid educational resources. Main resources include all Cambridge program materials and Cambridge online hub, Oxford English textbooks, and “Eduten” online platform for Finnish mathematics. Additional resources incorporate various websites for gamification, reading in English, creation of scientific glossaries and charts.

Responding to the question about institutional support, Marlen, physics teacher, outlined the following:

Extract 11:

First, infrastructure: websites, interactive boards, and so on. Also, for example in science specifically, there are certain websites where you can easily create glossaries for students, word banks, diagrams, and so on. All these websites are paid, and when teachers request them, the school covers the cost.

Administrators described regular monitoring, lesson observation and consulting not as means to put pressure on teachers but as a way to reveal spaces for their development and provide them with assistance.

The school structure includes several special departments: Cambridge coordinators, methodological department, and the department of extracurricular activities. These departments are intended to provide support in different aspects. They help to intensify EMI introduction, to develop interdisciplinary collaboration and to organize extracurricular events.

Furthermore, the administration supports teachers' initiatives in introduction of new textbooks and other educational resources or in the organization of special events. In addition, teachers mentioned that they have a significant degree of freedom in lesson planning. As soon as learning objectives and designated topics are covered, teachers can select ways to practice material independently, can introduce their own vision of efficient pedagogical methods and choose in-class activities accordingly.

Tamerlan, Finnish mathematics and English teacher, provided one bright example of teacher's independence and creativity in lesson planning:

Extract 12:

We have a great format called "Love Rock." Especially in grade 1, we can emphasize it. It's 15 minutes of additional materials when you can give students

something outside the official program, whatever you think is necessary for reinforcement or for helping them review and consolidate the material.

Emphasis on Students' Wellbeing and Psychological Comfort

Increased attention to students' psychological comfort, wellbeing, and stress relief represents another recurrent theme of all interviews, regardless of the interviewees' position. As the official school website indicates, the positive pedagogy is one of the key principles of the Finnish educational system, adopted for primary grades. The school charter confirms this principle in its core values: safety, mutual respect and trust. Kanat, vice principal for academic affairs, articulated this adherence to positive pedagogy at all stages as follows:

Extract 13:

Our teachers also try to meet students halfway and support them. It's not always easy, but we never stay aside.

Tamerlan, who teaches Finnish mathematics, underlined the importance of taking students' emotions, physical and psychological state into consideration to effectively organize the educational process without putting stress onto students, especially at early grades. This opinion is confirmed by the responses of the language teachers too.

Extracurricular Activities and International Collaboration

The last recurrent theme is extracurricular activities in English and international collaboration. The two main types of extracurricular activities include regular after-school clubs and special events.

Regular afterschool clubs incorporate courses of advanced English for different age groups, including speaking clubs with native speakers. Special events encompass a wide range of activities. Most of these events imply cross-curriculum links and interdisciplinary collaboration of teachers, as do the Science and Space fair; debates; UN simulations

combining global perspectives, science and English; sports competitions incorporating subject and language quizzes. English teachers also organize events dedicated to English learning. For example, the decade of English language when students implement small project or creative tasks, like posters, presentations etc. Play or artistic formats are intended for young learners.

The last area where English is an essential component covers various international events. First, several interviewees mentioned students' participation in international school competitions in different subject areas. Sometimes such competitions permit students to travel abroad. School employees also have opportunities to travel abroad on formal visits to foreign educational institutions for professional development and experience exchange. Guest visits are also common. The representatives of Cambridge Assessment and the authors of Finnish mathematics presented their educational products at school and provided training to the staff.

International guests visit the school for experience exchange. For example, Sabina, English teacher, talked about a program, through which students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US, come every year for practice and simultaneously share information about US higher education through formal and informal meetings:

Extract 14:

Our school also collaborates with another university, MIT. Their students come to visit us. It's good for them because they experience real school life, and it's good for us because we get to invite these students, native speakers, so they can talk about and demonstrate what studying abroad is really like, and what a real native speaker sounds like.

In sum, transition to EMI and integrating state curriculum with Cambridge program is a very complicated and multilayered process. School policies, additional subjects,

various forms of institutional support and strict hiring rules enable to shift from L1 to English relatively smoothly.

Teachers' Strategies and Instructional Adaptations to implement EMI transition

The following section presents the themes that emerged in response to RQ2: In what ways do teachers implement these policies and curricular adaptations to address both language and content learning needs at the primary and lower-secondary levels?

This section is informed by interview data obtained from both subject and language teachers. Some themes were common across both groups of teachers, while others were specific to either content or language teachers.

Teaching Philosophy and Self-Positioning

This subsection describes how teachers conceptualize their roles in the EMI transition. Here it seems appropriate to present separately the beliefs of content and language teachers.

Regarding the latter, it has been previously noted that the school's staffing policy positions English teachers as key facilitators who support students in using English not only during language lessons but also as a functional tool across subject areas.

What is noteworthy, is that one of the participating English teachers explicitly emphasized a pedagogical mission that extends beyond the development of academic English to include fostering students' critical thinking and independence. This stance aligns closely with the broader mission and values outlined in the school charter, and determines English teachers' strategies, practices and challenges.

As for subject teachers, findings show that, despite having CLIL preparation and using a wide range of pedagogical methods aimed at the acquisition of the linguistic aspect, they claim content priority for their subjects and see language primarily as a tool to

master content. As Adiya, chemistry, space science and primary science teacher articulated:

Extract 15:

But eventually I realized that language is just a tool, and the content itself is the most important, the core of our lessons.

However, the subject instructors highlighted that they try to position themselves as EMI teachers from the very beginning and start speaking in English when meeting a new group of students. Afterwards they adjust their teaching accordingly creating more or less a bilingual classroom environment in relation to students' needs.

Although subject teachers pay a lot of attention to the language aspect at primary and lower secondary school, they see their purpose in gradually shifting focus from language to subject matter, transforming English to an instrument of communication.

This stance does not mean that subject teachers ignore students' language needs; on the contrary, they use different techniques to facilitate students' transition to EMI. This means that they do not seek a permanent perfect balance between language and content as claimed by the CLIL approach, rather they create a dynamic system of adaptation when the teaching focus changes over time. At primary and lower secondary stages, content teachers dedicate a lot of time to language, providing not only subject vocabulary, but also sentence starters and frames, simplifying complicated texts and adapting existing teaching materials to their learners' actual level of English. However, as soon as their students master core terminology, become able to understand instructions, express ideas and complete basic tasks through English, they transfer the lesson focus to content. Basically, subject teachers consider content comprehension and meaning making in English, fluency and science vocabulary knowledge as sufficient language skills for their subjects. Grammatical accuracy and the ability to use rich language remain low on their priorities. What subject

teachers consider as their responsibility is language differentiation and simplification in response to students' needs. Marlen, physics teacher, underlined that in terms of content, EMI science teachers have access to a very rich bank of educational resources, not only Cambridge program, but also to additional materials that can be found in free and paid online platforms, which allows for content differentiation; however, this does not relate to language complexity.

Extract 16:

In terms of language level, Cambridge doesn't take that into account. So, you have to simplify the language yourself, make the sentences easier, the wording simpler, because Cambridge materials are designed for students who already speak English.

Nevertheless, all teachers acknowledged that language-related challenges are particularly salient only at the initial stages of transition to EMI, whether this occurs in primary or secondary school. However, over time, the severity of language-related challenges diminishes, and by high school, the EMI environment generally enables teachers to shift their focus predominantly to content instruction. Marlen, physics teacher, answering the question whether there is difference in teaching in English in middle and high school, highlighted that this difference was considerable.

In short, language teachers see their role in building bridges from English to content, while subject teachers pay significant attention to language aspect at the beginning of EMI transition, but shift focus to content as soon as it becomes possible, depending on students' English proficiency.

Bilingual Teaching and Translanguaging

While the official school policy permits bilingual teaching until grades 7 - 8, subject teachers admitted that they sometimes mix L1 and English even at high school because of unequal levels of English among students. Marlen, physics teacher:

Extract 17:

I would say that even now I sometimes have to mix languages, because some students come from state schools where they didn't grow up in our school environment, and their English level is not sufficient.

School policies actively promote pure EMI from upper secondary school but do not impose the exclusive use of L1 and do not prohibit pedagogical translanguaging. Teachers support bilingual approach even more actively, underlining the impossibility of English-only pedagogy. As Marlen, physics teacher, articulated:

Extract 18:

Personally, I believe one must take a more flexible approach. Some teachers think you need to create a full English-only environment and that students will eventually understand everything. But I think that's difficult, and a softer transition is needed, for example, providing bilingual material at first.

All teachers, including language teachers, admitted the purposeful use of L1, drawing on gradual transition. Subject teachers explained that sometimes they had to resort to L1 after a formal EMI threshold because of individual students who did not have previous EMI background or because of the nature of certain assignments, like laboratory work, where strict comprehension of instructions is a matter of safety.

Naturally, language teachers demonstrated more adherence to minimizing L1, where possible, than content teachers. Nonetheless, language teachers also employ L1 in certain cases, usually explaining grammar or translating abstract lexis that cannot be visually represented. However, none of the participants, including administrators, indicated a need for the complete exclusion of L1 from instruction.

Pedagogical Strategies and Methods

All participants described a rich variety of pedagogical strategies and methods intended to facilitate vocabulary acquisition, enhance fluency and amplify linguistic confidence of students. A significant number of strategies are applied by both subject and language teachers. Many practices derive from CLIL-informed pedagogy, as confirmed by the participants, although neither the official school policy nor the instructors themselves claimed that the school's transitional model represented an example of CLIL approach. Notably, the range of pedagogical adaptations employed to facilitate EMI transition is extensive, and teachers demonstrated considerable creativity and flexibility in their implementation.

The first common strategy of subject and language teachers is differentiation and personalized approach to students. Differentiation of English proportion and complexity is determined by grade, students' individual levels, and task types. Acknowledging that differentiation is an additional challenge, most teachers still said that class sizes and their teaching load permitted them to accommodate students with different levels of subject and language proficiency. At primary school, usually, language proficiency of students does not differ considerably, while in higher grades this difference may be more significant because students come from various backgrounds. As was mentioned above, subject teachers understand that simplification and adjusting level of language complexity is their responsibility. Language teachers equally put effort into accommodating students with different paces and meeting their individual needs. Sabina, English teacher, explained:

Extract 19:

We also differentiate tasks because each class has students with different levels of English. Some get more complex tasks, some simpler ones.

Preplanned use of L1 is another strategy. Some teachers shared that they used pedagogical translanguaging in form of ‘sandwich method,’ when new material is first, presented in English, then is explained in L1, finally it is consolidated through English again. The amount of L1 in explanation may vary.

The next recurrent theme is the extensive use of all types of scaffolding, especially visual scaffolding. Both subject and language teachers support students’ comprehension and vocabulary memorization through visuals: at elementary school these are mostly pictures and flashcards, sometimes cartoons and short videos, while in higher grades these are charts, graphs, and longer videos. Videos may be used as topic introduction at the beginning of a class or as consolidation at the end. Some teachers use videos in L1 but annotated with guiding questions in English.

As a special type of visual scaffolding for younger children, teachers use gestures, facial expressions, miming and body movements. Adiya, chemistry and primary science teacher, said that her teaching style changed when she taught in English and she became ‘a sort of a ‘stage persona:’

Extract 20:

As the children say, I’m very expressive, I use my whole body, I can act out, show whether energy is high or low, whether I’m cold or hot. I run, jump and mime.

Audial scaffolding is mostly used by English teachers to teach correct pronunciation. Another widespread method of vocabulary memorization is the use of associations, analogies and cognates. With younger students, teachers may use associations with songs, cartoons, memes and other popular Internet content, while with older students, they look for similar terms in students’ L1, cognates, divide scientific terms into parts, identify Latin roots and find analogies.

Subject teachers often resort to language simplification: they deconstruct complicated texts, dividing them into small segments, paraphrase these segments using basic words and synthesize together the original explanation in a more understandable way. Teachers also emphasized that careful lesson planning was important and, in general, EMI classes follow classical lesson structure (a hook to engage students, main point, reflection) and apply similar organizational and interactional pedagogical practices, such as pair and group work, self- and peer assessment.

CLIL techniques, such as gap filling, texts with pre-reading and post-reading assignments, sentence starters and frames allowing students to speak on certain topics, were also mentioned among the applied pedagogical methods, especially for vocabulary and definitions memorization.

Teachers also differentiate memorization techniques for early grades and older students. With young learners they rely predominantly on pictures and associations, also using choral repetition, while at secondary school teachers apply drilling in form of repeating tasks, problem solving and practicing similar assignments with the same terminology multiple times.

One of the key strategies for young learners is gamification. Teachers of different subjects, including English, use play-based learning, online quizzes, games with flashcards, moving around the class, whereas Finnish mathematics is the quintessential example of this approach. As Tamerlan, Finnish mathematics and English teacher, highlighted:

Extract 21:

90–95% of it consists of game-based formats, exercises that are gamified. That's why this subject is, in a way, an anti-stress class for children.

Language teachers highlighted other methods aimed at the development of students' linguistic confidence, independence and critical thinking. First, these are debates and discussions. Starting from practicing simple dialogues at primary school, students gradually take part in complicated discussions, incorporating topics from different subjects, such as science, space science, global perspectives. In addition, project-based learning is emphasized, especially for knowledge consolidation. Small-scale projects are motivating, engaging, develop creativity, imagination, and higher order thinking skills. These types of tasks align with the idea of contextual learning, focusing not on discrete language items but providing students with sentence starters, ready-made constructions and relevant contexts to apply them.

Another interesting point, outlined out by English teachers, is the initiative to introduce students to reading in English from early grades and instil the value of reading. For this purpose, English teachers organize additional reading activities for primary school: reading time, collaboration with library and library visits, creation of pocketbooks for topics consolidation.

Assessment Criteria

In this subsection the findings are presented separately for subject and language teachers, because they have different assessment criteria.

Subject teachers explicitly outlined that they assessed, above all, content knowledge. If students are able to convey subject knowledge and express their ideas in any format, including drawings and charts, their answers are accepted. The only linguistic aspect they strictly assess is the knowledge of subject-specific terminology. To a certain degree, teachers pay attention to fluency and linguistic confidence as they rely on students' ability to express themselves in oral or written form for content evaluation. However, they do not assess grammar accuracy or correct grammar errors, nor do they consider these

linguistic aspects as their responsibility. On the contrary, subject teachers try to relieve language anxiety of students and make them immune to language mistakes. As Adiya, chemistry teachers, said:

Extract 22:

The most important thing for students is to learn to understand the meaning and convey it correctly, even if there are some language errors.

The assessment criteria employed by English teachers clearly differ from those used by subject teachers. Their goal is to find balance between fluency and accuracy. The focus may shift a little toward fluency in speaking tasks and toward accuracy in writing but overall, the assessment covers both aspects. As Sabina, English teacher, articulated:

Extract 23:

I think both aspects should go hand in hand. Fluency is good, of course, but if 50% of the speech is incorrect, it becomes very hard to relearn later in life because the person has grown up speaking with errors.

Key Challenges

English teachers see their key challenge in the necessity to prepare students for EMI environment, while subject teacher outline several specific problematic areas. First, it is the unpreparedness of students to learn in English in lower secondary school and their unequal levels of English proficiency.

Insufficient language proficiency often leads to another challenge - psychological resistance of students to EMI. Students who master the content but lack English proficiency may become reluctant to EMI environment and teachers have to look for individual approaches to engage and motivate these students and to relieve their stress and language anxiety.

Surprisingly, subject teachers mentioned that even in higher grades, and especially in higher grades, students experience reading problems. They lack motivation for reading extensive explanations and instructions. For this reason, they might misunderstand tasks or core content. Students tend to prefer receiving oral instructions from teachers rather than independently engaging with lengthy texts or complex written problems.

Students' Wellbeing as Pedagogical Strategy

Not only does school's official policy strongly focus on students' psychological comfort, but teachers also imply positive supportive pedagogy as one of their key strategies of successful teaching. Both subject and language teachers acknowledged the right of students to make mistakes and their right to different emotions, including negative. They understand that EMI transition may be associated with considerable challenges for students and, consequently, psychological discomfort, anxiety and stress. That is why they attempt to create a safe space where errors become growth zones, not problems. They try to take into consideration psychological and physical state (fatigue toward the end of the week or day) of their students as well as their age characteristics. These considerations help teachers adjust the level of complexity of tasks and classroom pace to students' situation on a specific day. As Sabina, English teacher, highlighted:

Extract 24:

So, giving them time and support is my main strategy, helping them feel confident that making mistakes is okay and that they will be supported.

Teachers regard the creation of a friendly and supportive classroom environment as a key priority. For this purpose, they do not hesitate to draw on students' L1 when necessary.

In a nutshell, pedagogical strategies and methods, aiming at soft EMI transition, are diverse and are driven by school policies, teachers' self-positioning, assessment criteria and by the emphasis on students' psychological comfort.

Cross-Curricular Collaboration

A cross-curriculum approach is identified on the school's website as one of the core pedagogical principles for the primary level. Administrators likewise emphasized that cross-curricular connections constitute an essential component of the school's educational system. Kanat, vice principal for academic affairs, underlined:

Extract 25:

Cross-curricular integration has been happening here for a long time. It exists across all subjects, even when we develop curriculum plans.

Interviews with teachers confirmed that cross-curricular links and interdisciplinary collaboration represented an important aspect of curriculum planning and daily school life, promoted and supported by the administration.

As English classes serve as a bridge to English-medium subject lessons, the syllabi of English courses are largely aligned with STEM-subjects in terms of topics and vocabulary. Moreover, English textbooks for primary school are CLIL-oriented and strongly connected to other subjects; for example, science – three states of matter, natural resources, waste recycling; art – primary and secondary colors; music - classification of musical instruments, symphonic orchestra composition. Sabina, English teacher, talked about English textbooks for elementary school:

Extract 26:

We use the Oxford Discover textbook. I like that this textbook has a very natural integration with other subjects. So, this is CLIL.

Certain overlapping of language and subject classes syllabi, as well as cross-curricular links between different subjects, not only between English and STEM, persist across all school levels. Interdisciplinary teachers' collaboration begins with proactive lesson planning before the start of each academic year, at the stage of syllabi finalization, then collaborative activities are further adjusted and closely coordinated during the school year. Furthermore, in the process of interdisciplinary collaboration, teachers even conduct small-scale action research to determine the most effective ways of cooperation.

In general, cross-curricular collaboration is implemented in two main modes. The first mode is alignment of materials and vocabulary and joint regular classes, sometimes small-scale in-class cross-curricular projects, aiming at better knowledge acquisition.

The second type of collaboration is realized as stand-alone interdisciplinary projects that often occur outside regular classes, in form of special school-wide events. Among these events, school staff named space and space science fairs, UN simulations, different debates, preparation and participation in international school competitions held in English. Marlen, physics teacher, described these projects as follows:

Extract 27:

Science Fair is usually students' experiments or models. We, as science teachers, provide information, objectives, topics, and explanations. The English teachers work with students on their speeches and presentations, because it's a public event, visitors come, watch, and so on.

Preparation for international school Olympiads also may require joint effort of subject and language teachers, including native speakers. One of the English teachers also mentioned that his students sometimes asked him for assistance with the language aspect of other subjects. However, English teachers claimed that their subject colleagues did not need collaboration in form of helping them prepare language part of their classes, as their

level of English was sufficient to handle this work independently. As it was mentioned in the subsection about hiring policy, all subject teachers are assessed for English proficiency, and the overwhelming majority not only have experience in teaching in English but have received education in EMI institutions. Thus, cross-curricular collaboration is usually implemented as joint classes or projects where English teachers help students present their work in English rather than contributing to the linguistic aspects of subject syllabi.

Conclusion

This case study explored the system of policies, curricular and instructional adaptations employed in an Astana private school to transfer students from learning in their L1 to EMI for the majority of subjects.

Nine main themes connected to the RQ1, namely school policies and curricular adaptations, emerged after the data analysis: 1) hybrid educational model; 2) additional subjects taught in English and early start of English language classes; 3) finalization of the transitional model in progress; 4) cross-curriculum approach; 5) preparation for university studies abroad; 6) attention to teachers' role, qualifications and professional development 7) institutional support for teachers aimed at EMI transition; 8) emphasis on students' wellbeing; 9) extracurricular activities and international collaboration. Six main themes were identified in relation with the RQ2 (teachers' strategies and instructional adaptations): 1) teaching philosophy and self-positioning; 2) bilingual teaching and translanguaging 3) pedagogical strategies and methods; 4) assessment criteria; 5) key challenges 6) students' wellbeing as pedagogical strategy. For RQ3 one recurrent theme appeared in the interviews and curricular documents – clear presence of cross-curriculum approach and emphasized interdisciplinary teachers' collaboration. The findings for

corresponding themes will be discussed in relation to the literature and theoretical framework in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the findings presented in the preceding chapter in light of the existing literature. It aims to interpret the results of the study through their connection to previous literature on EMI transition. By situating the findings within the broader research context, this chapter seeks to offer a deeper understanding of how EMI transition can be effectively implemented in secondary school settings.

The purpose of this study was to investigate EMI transition school policies, curricular and instructional adaptations in a private school in Kazakhstan. The research was based on qualitative data collected through seven semi-structured interviews with school employees. In addition, institutional data were analyzed, using the school's official website and three curricular documents (the school charter and two calendar thematic plans for grade 7 mathematics).

To engage with the findings in relation to existing literature, the themes identified across the three research questions are presented in four interrelated domains: (1) institutional and structural adaptations, (2) curricular adaptations and content and language alignment, (3) pedagogical and classroom-level adaptations, and (4) affective dimensions of EMI transition. This classification allows for a multi-level analysis of EMI implementation, moving from meso-level (institutional policy and curriculum) to micro-level (classroom practices and expected learner experiences). This structure helps highlight how the identified practices contribute to the effectiveness of EMI transition in the given educational context.

Institutional and Structural Adaptations for EMI Transition

EMI transition is not just classroom practice, but a systemically engineered model or a set of interconnected measures at the institutional (school-policy) level, i.e. meso-level, that work together to reach the same goal. Various structural adaptations

predetermine the institution's capacity for change. As described by Karabassova in her comparative study of NIS and mainstream schools, "NIS had more capacity for changing the larger context and infrastructure. The curriculum, resources, school leaving exams and other components in the school ecosystem were aligned with English-medium teaching" (p. 566). Similarly, this private school also has undergone structural modifications covering all aspects of the school ecosystem for EMI transition.

Hybrid Educational Model, Emerging Final Model & Curriculum in Progress

Institutional and structural adaptations are closely connected to the type of bilingual transitional education, or educational model, selected by the educational institution (school). The first and the most recurrent theme of the findings is the hybrid educational model implemented at the research site. In this case, the hybrid model has double meaning: first, integration of state Kazakhstani curriculum and Cambridge international program for secondary schools; second, mixed MoI mode with gradual increase of EMI. That is why this hybrid model is both a language policy decision and a curricular adjustment simultaneously. If we classify it according to Cummins (2000), this model refers to late-exit type, which implies several years of studies in the mother tongue before transitioning to another MoI. This is exactly the idea underlying the terms of the EMI transition at the school in question. All the subjects are taught in students' L1 for the first two grades, except providing basic terms in English in space science and Finnish mathematics. This is an intentional policy aiming at the development of students' L1 and their cognitive abilities in L1. The next three grades envisage gradual introduction of the number of partially EMI subjects and gradual increase of the share of English in bilingual teaching. Even, the start of the Cambridge primary program planned for the following academic year does not imply complete switching to English but only earlier integration of state and Cambridge curricula, as well as a rise of EMI percentage in teaching. As full

EMI is implemented for biology, physics, chemistry and computer science from grade 8, and for mathematics from grade 10, the number of years of L1 instruction (more than four years before transitioning fully to English), allows school's educational model to be classified as late-exit bilingual education. This late-exit model, promoted and supported by Cummins (2000) is not universally acknowledged as the only beneficial option of English immersion; however, several authors who studied effects of early and late-exit models have evaluated it positively (Baker & Wright, 2025; Mohanty, 2018). Advantages and challenges of the late-exit type of bilingual education in the Asian context were investigated by Marsh et al. (2000). The authors argued that late immersion in English leads to strong gains in language proficiency but may temporarily hinder content learning, especially for lower-achieving students; however, in most cases students are able to restore their performance in non-language subjects over time and overcome provisional academic challenges without long-term negative consequences. In short, Marsh et al. (2000) also evaluate the late-exit model positively, provided that certain conditions are met (flexible approach to MoI, supportive pedagogical practices etc.).

The third theme is the fluidity and incompleteness of the final educational model and school's individual integrated curriculum. Private schools are a relatively recent phenomenon in Kazakhstan; trilingual policy, including EMI introduction are even more recent (Bridges, 2014; Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). Consequently, most schools intending to implement EMI, especially those that do not fully adopt western curricula but instead integrate home languages with English, and Kazakhstani curriculum with foreign programs, are still in the process of developing their educational programs. The ongoing process of curricular modifications at the school is confirmed by the absence of the final overarching curricular document. This fluidity and ongoing change can be explained by the attempts to adapt general EMI model to the specific context and linguistic situation in

Kazakhstan. Similar situation was identified in Hong Kong when after the reform of 2010 schools gained flexibility to combine EMI with Chinese medium instruction and adjust this combination accordingly. However, alongside positive changes, this led to uneven implementation of EMI and misalignment between educational policies and classroom practices (Poon et al., 2013). Thus, the transition period along with the freedom to choose and integrate different models and mixed-language modes, presents not only opportunities for improvement but also potential risks.

Institutional Requirements and Support for Teachers

The next two findings: attention to teachers' role, qualifications and professional development and institutional support for teachers, can be attributed to school policies and discussed together as they are closely connected. Most international studies in EMI transition suggest that teachers' competences, teacher training and institutional support play a crucial role in the successful implementation of EMI. Systematic reviews such as Gilányi et al. (2023), analyzed empirical research on EMI and CLIL in primary and secondary school contexts across Asia, covering publications from 2015 to 2022. In addition, Pun et al. (2024), analyzed 66 empirical studies (2000 - 2021) on language challenges and coping strategies in EMI classrooms in secondary and higher education from Asia (including one study in Kazakhstani Higher education), Europe, Africa, and the US. Both studies outlined teacher-related challenges (balancing content and language, limited pedagogical knowledge, language proficiency issues, classroom interaction constraints) and the need for intensification and amplification of teacher professional development as one of the main implications. While a majority of studies conducted in Kazakhstan in secondary education confirmed that subject teachers often lack language proficiency and necessary pedagogical skills in CLIL, the root of this problem appears to

be insufficient teacher training and very limited institutional support (Goodman et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2022a; 2022b; Ryspayeva et al., 2025).

The findings of this study, based on both administrators' and teachers' interviews, demonstrated that most teachers working in this private school either were initially trained in English or had received additional professional development in EMI and CLIL outside school and continue to have regular complementary training within the school. In contrast, Mehisto et al.'s (2022) analysis of professional development program for public school teachers designed to transition them to EMI showed low effectiveness and a formal one-size-fit-all implementation that focused solely on language, not CLIL pedagogical techniques. Moreover, several studies, conducted in public schools and even across the NIS network have confirmed a limited awareness of advanced teaching practices for integrating content and language, a predominant focus on content with linguistic aspect often overlooked, and continued adherence to traditional teacher-centered and lecture-based instruction (Goodman et al. 2023; Karabassova, 2021; Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023). As a result, many studies call for reforming and improving pre-service and in-service teacher training (Bedeker et al., 2023; Goodman et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2018). Nevertheless, in terms of teacher preparation, this private school is more similar to the NIS network, as they are both elite, selective and resource-rich. In addition, the ideology of this school aligns with that of NIS, where "professional development was a continuous process" (Karabassova, 2018, p. 562).

The findings of the current study showed that school administration required high teacher proficiency and initiative in EMI transition while also emphasizing institutional support in the form of additional training, supervision and consulting, access to world-ranked EMI textbooks, various paid educational resources, support of teachers' ideas and initiatives for regular classes and extra activities. This is another similarity between this

school and the NIS network. Comparing NIS with mainstream schools, Karabassova (2021) stated “NIS network used a combination of pressure and support in introducing English-medium instruction. The support entailed giving teachers time and an opportunity to prepare for a gradual transition” (p. 560). Interviews with this private school’s teachers confirmed that they not only accepted responsibility for EMI transition process but also felt supported. While one of the STEM teachers at this private school mentioned that EMI teachers did not have any problems with teaching resources and materials as they had access to a huge global bank, teachers at public schools struggle to procure these resources. As stated by Karabassova (2021), “[t]eachers also complained about the lack of textbooks, designed for teaching subject in English and approved by the ministry” (p. 565). Instructors at mainstream schools often feel abandoned and have to rely on their own agency and independent effort to provide their students with adequate learning materials (Bedeker et al., 2023; Manan et al., 2024; 2025).

What is also noteworthy is that not only do administrators recognize the crucial role of teachers in the EMI transition process, but the reverse is also evident. As suggested by Karabassova (2021), “teachers in both contexts stressed the importance of school administrators’ capacity to lead changes” (p. 566). In public schools, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with administrators’ ability to effectively implement EMI reforms and emphasized the need for administrators to engage in additional professional development in this area. In contrast, teachers in the private school context reported feeling more supported and understood by their leadership. Furthermore, school administrators in this school often simultaneously hold teaching positions, which directly involves them in EMI implementation and contributes to a greater sense of responsibility for facilitating the transition process.

Preparing Students for University Studies Abroad and other activities aimed at internationalization

Another school policy identified as a recurrent theme in the interviews, in the school's website, and charter is the preparation of students for university studies abroad and raising global citizens who feel comfortable in any environment. This strategy aligns with the general goal of the EMI introduction to Kazakhstan's educational system - modernization, global competitiveness and global mobility of Kazakhstani school and university graduates (Bridges, 2014; Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). However, this trend is not observed in mainstream schools, only in elite networks like NIS (Karabassova, 2021). On the other hand, in this private school, not only is the whole educational system built to integrate students into global educational system, the school has a special admissions and career orientation department that provides students and parents with comprehensive information about educational opportunities abroad. This international orientation largely correlates with the major drivers for private school enrollment in Kazakhstan described by Chankseliani (2014), which are the demands for English-enhanced instruction and preparation for international higher education. To satisfy this demand, private schools often position themselves as gateways to global academic mobility, aligning with Kazakhstan's broader modernization and internationalization agenda. This tendency is clearly demonstrated by the school in this study.

The last identified element in the school policy is active engagement of students and teachers in different extracurricular activities, international students' competitions, games, and meetings with foreign visitors and lecturers held in English or partly in English. Opportunities for administrators and teachers to travel abroad for professional development or to learn on-site from best foreign practices align with a general school course for internationalization and modernization that is also present in the NIS network

(Karabassova, 2021). However, this is just a complementary practice aimed at enhancing bilingual teaching, gradual EMI transition and orientation towards studies abroad. As a minor but very specific part transitional education, usually extracurricular activities are not reflected as a separate theme in the EMI literature.

Curricular Integration and Content–Language Alignment

The following themes refer to curricular adaptations, i.e. divergences from state educational programs, implemented at institutional (meso-level) that are aimed at enhanced English instruction, gradual EMI transition, compliance with international standards and integration of content and language learning.

Curricular Adaptations (Integration of State Curriculum and Cambridge Program Additional Subjects in English, Early Start of English Classes)

Curriculum differentiation, as suggested by Chankseliani (2014), is another key stimulus determining the demand for private schools in Kazakhstan. Private schools usually offer alternative or international curricula and greater flexibility compared to state-mandated programs. This may include incorporation of foreign programs and enhanced English language instruction. According to Chankseliani (2014), private schools often position themselves as innovation hubs for EMI and curriculum reform. The emphasis on English reflects both policy pressure and parental demand, while hybrid curricula (local and international) emerge because schools should balance state standards and global competitiveness.

The school's curriculum differs significantly from the state curriculum not only because it incorporates Cambridge program for STEM subjects but also because it includes a number of additional subjects taught through English (Finnish mathematics and space science at primary school, global perspectives and business studies at secondary school). Moreover, the school's curriculum envisages early start of English language classes and

increased number of lessons per week. One of the main goals of all these measures is achieving a certain level of English proficiency by the time of full EMI transition (grade 8). The minimum level is B1, while the ideally expected level is B2. The idea of threshold level of English that is indispensable for successful EMI implementation was discussed in many studies across different contexts. For example, comparing EMI and home language instruction in the context of Hong Kong, Fung (2020) emphasizes the importance of threshold effect. Students need a minimum level of L2 to benefit from EMI. Conversely, this may result in increased challenges and cognitive overload. Similarly, Marsh et al. (2000) underlined the crucial role of language threshold for successful EMI transition. Many studies conducted in the context of Kazakhstan outlined insufficient students' English proficiency as one of the main challenges of EMI introduction at public schools (Goodman et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2018; Mehisto et al., 2022; Manan, et al., 2024, Manan & Hajar, 2024).

Cross-Curriculum Approach and Interdisciplinary Teacher Collaboration

This theme, cross-curriculum approach, is claimed to be one of the guiding school policies, especially at primary stage, and is implemented through interdisciplinary collaboration which appear as both school policy and pedagogical strategy implemented by individual teachers.

According to administrators' and teachers' interviews, interdisciplinary is encouraged and promoted by school policies and supported by the administration. Language teachers emphasized that English textbooks have an integrated approach and reflect the content of different subjects. Moreover, all teachers shared that they had collaborative lesson planning and joint classes. Finally, many extracurricular events imply the participation of subjects and language teachers. The professional and linguistic level of subject teachers at the school permits them to teach linguistic components without the

support of language teachers, allowing them to focus on the planning of joint classes and special events.

In general, cooperation of language and content teachers and collaborative pedagogical practices were positively evaluated by studies conducted in different contexts for instance, among multilingual learners at secondary schools in the USA (Meskill, & Oliveira, 2019), in a preparatory program in Turkey (Akincioglu & Lin, 2021) and, especially, in higher education in Asian countries (Pun et al., 2024). Paired teaching and/or collaborative lesson planning realized by subject and language instructors led to better learning outcomes and more inclusive classrooms. In Kazakhstan, the research conducted by Montgomery and De Costa (2024) in the context of higher education demonstrated positive effects of the collaboration of content and language instructors on students' motivation and performance but also showed that it was a manifestation of teachers' responsive agency and their independent initiative in order to mitigate top-down policy requirements and institutional challenges. The findings of this study demonstrate that teacher collaboration, interdisciplinary approach, and alignment of language classes with content subjects are an intentional school policy documented in the official website. Hence, collaborative practices are supported by the school administration with resources allocation. Furthermore, teachers are willingly engaged in shared lesson planning and teaching, although it requires time and additional effort. However, since their teaching load is not as high as in mainstream schools, this leaves space for collaboration. In this aspect, the practices at this private school again demonstrates convergence with the findings of Karabassova (2021) who compared NIS network and mainstream schools: "While teachers in mainstream schools did not mention peer observations and working with colleagues, for NIS teachers, collaboration seemed to be a natural and integral part of their work" (Karabassova, 2021, p. 564). Therefore, schools possessing more resources are able to

create an environment promoting collaborative pedagogical practices, while schools experiencing shortage of resources cannot do this, despite the fact that their teachers are in stronger need of peer support due to insufficient training in English and CLIL.

Pedagogical Mediation of Content and Language Learning and Classroom-Level Adaptations

The findings in relation to classroom practices are based on teacher's interviews and represent micro-level pedagogical strategies and techniques that enable students to transition to EMI for STEM subjects or support their academic English.

Teaching Philosophy & Self-Positioning of Teachers

The first theme is teaching philosophy and self-positioning of teachers, i.e. how they conceptualize their roles in the EMI transition process. This aspect is critically important for the EMI transition because motivation of change agents is the core element of educational change (Fullan, 2006, as cited in Karabassova, 2021, p. 567).

The subject teachers at the school claim the priority of content over linguistic aspects and focus primarily on scientific concepts rather than English language, which aligns with numerous studies about the challenges in EMI implementation. Noticeably, in Kazakhstan, as in many Asian countries, policies at state and institutional levels usually aim general EMI, while CLIL, or partial CLIL-informed practices, can only be introduced by individual training programs, institutions or educators. For instance, Wannagat (2007) comparing European model (CLIL) with Hong Kong model (EMI), emphasized that CLIL succeeds because it integrates language and content through interaction, while EMI often fails because it treats language as invisible. Equally, insufficient attention to the language aspect negatively affecting students' learning outcomes was noted by many researchers in Kazakhstan (Goodman et al., 2023; Karabassova, 2018; Manan & Hajar, 2024). However, in the context of Kazakhstan, the relative neglect of linguistic dimensions in EMI

classrooms can be attributed to a top-down policy approach that positions STEM teachers as dual-role practitioners (content and language) without providing adequate support. As a result, science teachers, despite demonstrating responsive agency, tend to maintain a subject-specialist identity, which gives rise to tensions, identity conflicts, and challenges in effective implementation (Manan & Hajar, 2024). On the other hand, the self-positioning of EMI teachers as pure content instructors through English is not unambiguous.

According to Bedeker et al. (2023), EMI STEM teachers appear as hybrid, adaptive agents and multilingual, flexible practitioners. Maybe, they do not pay sufficient pedagogical attention to language aspects, as prescribed by CLIL principles but, in return, their hybrid multilingual practices are guided by the understanding of students' needs and desire to make knowledge accessible.

At this school, despite STEM teachers' claims of content priority and self-positioning as subject teachers, many interview extracts contradict these statements and demonstrate their significant awareness of CLIL-informed pedagogy and considerable engagement with linguistic aspects. At least, in the transition period, subject teachers pay significant attention, above all, to vocabulary and terminology but also to sentence frames and sentence starters, simplification, paraphrasing, and language differentiation. Teachers acknowledged that they had to reconsider English teaching materials to make them accessible to their students. They were aware of and implemented different CLIL techniques, especially in vocabulary acquisition.

As for English teachers, it is noteworthy that at the school in question, they clearly see their roles as facilitators of EMI transition: they must prepare students for content subjects in English and to bridge gaps between language and subject learning. This theme is not omnipresent in the research on English teachers' roles and identities in Kazakhstan. The analysis of several research articles on English teachers' roles across educational

contexts in Kazakhstan, including primary education (Zhetpisbayeva et al., 2016), secondary school English teaching (Zhunussova et al., 2022), and broader EFL teacher identity development (Seitova et al., 2025), showed that English teachers are consistently positioned as language-focused practitioners, yet none of these studies conceptualizes their role as bridging language and content or as active agents of EMI transition.

Bilingual Teaching / Translanguaging

The next important finding is the acceptance of bilingual teaching and classroom translanguaging by both content and language teachers. English-only policy is not strictly imposed at this school, although strongly recommended from certain threshold level (grade 8) and teachers treat this bilingual model somewhat broadly. Numerous studies demonstrated the negative consequences of English-only policies in contexts where English is not students' L1 (An & Macaro, 2025; Manan, 2020; Manan, et al., 2020; Manan & Tul-Kubra, 2022; Manan et al., 2024). In contrast, pedagogical translanguaging was evaluated as a beneficial practice for students' content understanding and psychological wellbeing (Phyak et al., 2022; Pun, 2021; Tavares, 2015; Zhou et al., 2021). In Kazakhstan, teachers widely use translanguaging and code-switching, however, often experience discomfort and guilt because of the institutional requirements prescribing monolingual L2 teaching (Bedeker et al. 2023; Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023). At this school, teachers feel freer to switch to students' L1 in order to explain difficult grammar (language teachers) or complicated abstract scientific concepts (content teachers), for giving exact instructions, for enhancing students' engagement, and for shifting classroom interaction patterns towards students-centered approach and their active participation. All this becomes possible because the school model is positioned as bilingual and the use of L1 is allowed until upper-secondary grades. Gradual and flexible increase of English

language in teaching contrasts with the radical demand to switch completely to English within one year in public schools identified by Karabassova (2021).

Moreover, interviews with teachers demonstrated that they tried to use bilingual teaching and translanguaging strategically: to explain complicated concepts, ensure full comprehension of instructions, and emphasize essential information. Even when they had to translate some content into students' L1, they used the 'sandwich method' (initial presentation in English, then, explanation in L1, finally, summarizing the main points in English), which contrasts with what sometimes happens in mainstream schools – translating all content from English to L1 or vice-versa. Regarding the latter, Karabassova (2021) noted that “[t]eachers (...) reported duplicating the same content in two languages in order to ensure achieving learning objectives” (p. 564).

Pedagogical Strategies, Methods and Assessment Criteria

The interviews with teachers showed that both content and language teachers used a very wide range of pedagogical strategies: translanguaging, paraphrasing and language simplification, various types of scaffolding, multimodal input, differentiation, associations, gamification, and extensive use of additional materials. Most of these methods were listed as teacher coping strategies applied in EMI classrooms in different contexts in the review completed by Pun et al. (2024). Among teachers' strategies these authors mentioned code-switching / translanguaging, scaffolding techniques, multimodal support, pre-teaching vocabulary, slowing down speech pace, structured interaction. The results of numerous empirical studies support the findings of the review (Meskill & Oliveira, 2019; Pun & Cheung, 2021; Pun & Thomas, 2020; Richards & Pun, 2021). Similar strategies were identified by the researchers in Kazakhstan analyzing EMI teachers' experiences at public schools (Bedeker et al., 2023; Goodman et al., 2023; Manan & Hajar, 2024; Manan et al. 2024a; 2025). However, teachers in this private school have considerably more

opportunities to apply differentiation and student-centered interaction because of smaller size-classes; pre-teaching vocabulary because of high quality textbooks and gadgets; multimodal scaffolding and gamification because of the access to paid resources. Moreover, English teachers, due to curricula alignments and increased number of lessons, can support their subject colleagues. In a nutshell, pedagogical techniques, which at public schools are dependent on teachers' responsive agency with minimal support, are considered normal in a private school due to the support of the school administration and availability of appropriate teaching materials and infrastructure.

The next theme, assessment criteria, is connected to teachers' conceptualization of their roles. EMI STEM teachers do not assess their students' language knowledge, apart from key terminology acquisition. This theme is closely connected to the approach implemented in each context, EMI or CLIL. Integrated teaching implies integrated assessment; however, CLIL principles are not always realized in practice even at elite schools (Karabassova, 2018; 2021). The representatives of the current private school did not state that the school officially applied CLIL approach; only individual teachers mentioned that they were trained in CLIL pedagogy and used CLIL assignments.

As for the assessment in EMI classrooms in Kazakhstan, Goodman et al. (2023) argue that there is mismatch between assessment expectations and classroom reality: assessments often rely on traditional content knowledge (not communicative or language-integrated tasks), which discourages teachers from designing CLIL-style lessons. That is why Goodman et al. (2023) call for curriculum and assessment reform: exams and tests should reflect communicative and conceptual understanding, so that CLIL/EMI teaching becomes pedagogically justified and not just a technical MoI switch. Apparently, reconsidering assessment criteria may be useful for private schools too, as despite integrated teaching, assessment remains largely factual knowledge oriented.

The topic of assessment criteria in EMI settings is not sufficiently researched in Kazakhstani context nor at public neither at private schools.

In general, interviews with teachers revealed that in a private school they could enjoy a certain degree of autonomy in their pedagogical practices, and even felt eligible to propose changes to the school administration, whereas at public schools, including those within the NIS network, “[...] excessive accountability and paperwork” were mentioned as “factors impeding change” (Karabassova, 2021, p. 565).

Affective and Experiential Dimensions of EMI Transition

Modern curriculum theories position affective and experiential dimensions of learning as an integral part of curriculum (Su, 2012). Su emphasizes the importance of students’ subjective experiences: their feelings, interpretations, interactions, and engagement with content, and stresses that effective curriculum should be responsive and flexible, adapting to learners’ needs, backgrounds, and evolving classroom dynamics. The current study did not examine students’ experiences directly but focused on the efforts of administrators and teachers to create positive students’ experiences and to mitigate the challenges of EMI transition.

Students’ Wellbeing and Psychological Comfort as School Policy and Pedagogical Strategy

EMI transition is cognitively demanding and emotionally sensitive. This school’s policies explicitly prioritize comfort, confidence, trust, non-threatening environments and the experiential curriculum dimension.

Key researchers in the field of transitional bilingual education also paid significant attention to the affective and experiential dimensions of EMI transition. Cummins (2000) emphasized that successful language learning depends on learners’ sense of identity, confidence, and psychological safety. When students feel valued and can use their L1 as a

cognitive and emotional resource, anxiety is reduced and participation increases; abrupt immersion without support can lead to stress, disengagement, and identity crisis. Mohanty (2018) argues that multilingual learners' experiences are deeply shaped by power relations between languages. Imposing a dominant language without recognizing learners' linguistic repertoires can create alienation and reduced self-esteem, whereas inclusive multilingual practices foster sense of belonging and emotional well-being. Baker and Wright (2025) highlighted that affective factors (motivation, anxiety, attitudes) strongly influence EMI outcomes. Positive classroom climate, supportive pedagogy, and gradual transitions enhance student confidence and engagement, while high-pressure, English-only environments may hinder both emotional comfort and learning effectiveness. Therefore, EMI transition is not only a cognitive shift but also an emotional experience, where psychological comfort and inclusive language practices are essential for effective and equitable learning.

Thus, within the school under study, students' positive experiences and well-being are prioritized not only at the level of institutional policy but are also actively addressed in classroom practice, where teachers deliberately attend to affective and experiential dimensions of learning. Despite a dense and intensive curriculum, positive pedagogy aimed at supporting students, caring for their psychological state and mitigating stress were listed by both content and language teachers as their core pedagogical strategies. This approach explains their refusal to employ a strictly monolingual English-only teaching, but instead prioritize individualization of tasks, student-centered pedagogy, active engagement of students into classroom practices.

Teachers explicitly stated that students' wellbeing and confidence are one of their priorities and, due to class sizes and other positive modifications (curricular adaptations, access to resources), they had real possibilities to be supportive, to differentiate tasks and

to engage students. They tried to create student-centered classroom environments where teacher-student and student-student interaction was active, dynamic and flexible. Many studies in different contexts noted that transition to EMI often led to decreased students' participation and shifted interaction patterns towards teacher-centered pedagogy which, in turn, caused lowered students' motivation and increased cognitive and psychological load (An & Macaro, 2025; Hennebry & Gao, 2021; Lo & Macaro, 2012; Lo & Macaro, 2015). Positive pedagogy is outlined as one of the school policies in the official website and charter, while the fact that teachers emphasized this aspect too, permits to positively evaluate the school's educational model.

There were not many studies dedicated directly to affective dimensions of EMI transition in Kazakhstan. Manan (2025) studied STEM teachers' emotional labor in the conditions of EMI transition, Kambatyrova (2024) investigated parents' attitudes to EMI introduction at secondary schools, while Hajar (2024) examined high-school students' evaluations of their experiences regarding learning science through English. Certain similarities of this study's findings can be observed with Bedeker et al.'s (2023) research on EMI STEM teachers at mainstream schools. The latter revealed that at public schools EMI subject instructors also put strong emphasis on student emotional comfort and inclusivity. Teachers rejected rigid EMI and teacher-centered approach and adopted 'humanizing' and flexible pedagogies to support students' emotional and linguistic needs. However, comparing the results of the current study and the findings of Bedeker et al. (2023), inequalities that exist between public and private sectors are observable. Teachers at private schools have more opportunities to maintain students' comfort due to institutional support, whereas teachers at mainstream schools have considerably less time and resources to be allocated to this aspect.

Key Classroom Challenges

Key challenges mentioned by this private school' teachers include unequal level of students' language and subject proficiency, decreased students' motivation, and classroom participation. This coincides with the challenges identified by researchers in global contexts (Fung, 2020; Gilanyi, et al., 2023; Marsh et al. 2000; Pun et al., 2024) and in Kazakhstan (Bedeker et al., 2023, Goodman et al., 2023; Manan & Hajar, 2024; Manan et al., 2024a; 2025). However, teachers at this school face less challenges than their counterparts in the public sector, because public schools are underresourced and understaffed. Moreover, all the existing problems are less pronounced in private schools because they have sufficient financial, human and infrastructural resources to provide differentiated and personalized approaches. As argued by Tleuov (2025), "[...] private school networks provide more opportunities for an individualized approach" (p. 24). Noticeably, in their interviews for the current study, teachers focused more on pedagogical strategies and institutional support rather than on challenges.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

EMI transition is a relevant topic for Kazakhstan because for the last twenty years Kazakhstan has been trying to introduce EMI with mixed results. While EMI in higher education, despite significant challenges, regional and institutional differences (Kerimkulova et al. 2023; Tajik et al., 2024) continues to grow steadily, the situation in the secondary sector is more controversial and heterogenous. According to Karabassova (2021; 2022), EMI is being implemented in the networks of elite schools sponsored by the state (NIS, BIL, Daryn), whereas in many mainstream public schools this reform has not been completed and has been postponed due to considerable issues. There is a number of public schools where EMI is practiced for certain subjects, but this has not become a universal standard for Kazakhstan.

Private schools with diverse models of EMI appear to be separate domains with no uniform policies and rules. Some schools function as full immersion programs having English as a sole MoI from grade 1. Others realize different transitional models in which shifting to EMI may be completed from primary to high school, often not simultaneously for different subjects. Alongside bilingual teaching, these private schools may introduce curricular modifications, integrating state curriculum with other programs (such as International Baccalaureate or Cambridge Assessment program).

Attempts of EMI transition at public schools and EMI practices in NIS have been studied by numerous researchers from different perspectives, while research on private schools is scarce. The current study aims at identifying internal school policies, curricular and instructional adaptations, as well as collaborative teacher practices, intended to facilitate EMI transition within one private school. The qualitative case study is based predominantly on the data gathered through interviews with school administrators, STEM and language teachers, completed by the results of document analysis.

Summary of the Main Findings

The main findings can be classified as 1) internal school policies and curricular modifications, 2) pedagogical strategies and methods applied by teachers and 3) modes of cross-curricular teachers' collaboration with regard to research questions. However, it is important to emphasize that many of the findings appear in more than one subsection, they are recurrent for the interviews with administrators, content and language teachers. For example, bilingual teaching, rejection of monolingual L2 teaching and pedagogical translanguaging are both a policy and a pedagogical strategy. Cross-curricular approach is promoted by school policies and official documents and is implemented as a classroom practice. Increased attention to students' wellbeing and psychological comfort is not only proclaimed "positive pedagogy" principle but also a teachers' strategy allowing to create supportive and inclusive classroom environment. The increased number of regular extracurricular activities and special events implying multilingual practices (sometimes also promoting international cooperation) is a policy that often requires interdisciplinary teacher collaboration. Therefore, the identified themes may be assigned to broader thematic clusters with connection to existing literature on EMI globally and in Kazakhstan: institutional and structural adaptations; curricular integration and content–language alignment; cross-curriculum approach and interdisciplinary teacher collaboration; affective and experiential dimensions of EMI transition. Thus, most of these diverse measures are interconnected, complement each other and function as an interdependent system. Only when applied simultaneously and in an interrelated way, not in form of separate curricular or instructional decisions, these adaptations can be effective and achieve their main goal: gradual and comfortable EMI transition.

The main finding is the school's unique hybrid model. The hybridity of this model is dual and is manifested, on the one hand, by bilingual teaching lasting for several years

with gradual transition from students' L1 to English, and, on the other hand, by integrating Kazakhstani state curriculum and Cambridge Assessment program. Another important curricular adjustment is the addition of several subjects taught through English or partially in English at primary and secondary school, as well as teaching English as subject from grade 1 and an increased number of classes per week compared to mainstream schools.

Moreover, an intentional alignment of language curriculum with content subjects' curricula, collaborative lesson planning and classroom practices contribute to the early development of academic English and create bridges between language classes and the linguistic demands of EMI subjects.

Alongside pedagogical translanguaging, teachers apply a broad range of teaching strategies and methods aiming to support language and content learning, including those not prescribed by official school curricula, teachers have a certain degree of freedom in lesson planning and realization. However, these strategies are not teachers' independent coping mechanisms as a response to institutional demands and constraints, in contrast, teachers receive assistance from the school administration as well as access to paid educational resources. Thus, these pedagogical strategies are nourished not by desperation in the conditions of limited resources and lack of support but as a manifestation of high proficiency and appropriate level of professional development. Another school policy consists in continuous teacher training inside the school and in outer organizations.

Naturally, most of these positive modifications are explained by the fact that private schools have considerably richer resources as it is in case of comparison of elite schools like NIS with mainstream public schools (Karabassova, 2021). On the other hand, networks like NIS, BIL, Daryn have relatively long-established models and experience of almost 20 years, while many private schools, including the school under investigation,

managed to develop their own bilingual transitional models and ways curricula integration in relatively short terms.

Recommendations and Implications

The results of the current research may be of interest for policymakers, curriculum and educational content developers, methodologists, school administrators, teacher trainers and teachers.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Curriculum Developers

Private schools tend to possess comparatively greater financial, infrastructural, and human resources, as well as a higher degree of flexibility in curriculum development; however, they remain subject to state licensing and regulatory frameworks. As a result, direct policy transfer from private to public schools may be challenging due to these structural differences. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the possibility that selected curricular and instructional practices from the private sector can be adapted to the contexts and needs of public schools.

The findings suggest that a transition from L1 instruction to EMI is unlikely to be effective if implemented abruptly and without adequate preparation, as such an approach may lead to increased challenges and a higher risk of unsuccessful outcomes (Karabassova, 2020; 2021; Manan & Hajar, 2024). These reforms are likely to require comprehensive planning, advance preparation of key stakeholders, and corresponding curricular adjustments.

First of all, the findings suggest that the introduction of EMI in individual subjects, in the absence of connections to language teaching, may limit its effectiveness. Insufficient number of English language classes and absence of topics alignment with scientific subjects often do not permit students to achieve threshold level (B1) necessary to study content through English. Although, as noted by Karabassova (2021), “the underlying

rationale of the reform was to use CLIL pedagogy to provide intensive exposure to English language in content classes without adding extra language teaching hours in the curriculum” (p. 567), many EMI researchers concluded that a minimal threshold level is essential for EMI introduction without negative consequences for content acquisition (Fung, 2020; Marsh et al.; 2000). Consequently, it appears that not only STEM teachers may need additional language and CLIL-oriented training, but that the broader system of English language teaching at public schools may also require reconsideration. This could involve an earlier introduction of language instruction, an increase in the number of instructional hours, and, in particular, a reconceptualization of content to connect language learning with the anticipated linguistic demands of subjects. Furthermore, the promotion of collaboration between subject and language teachers, alongside allocation of additional resources, especially time, for these collaborative practices may represent an important step in supporting this process.

The next possible solution is gradual introduction of EMI, meaning not only shifting to English one subject per academic year, but allowing models of partial and scaffolded EMI for a certain transitional period (Richards & Pun, 2021). The promotion of structured and pre-planned mixed-language instruction, along with the intentional use of pedagogical translanguaging, may contribute to a smoother transition. Furthermore, it appears that measures aimed at supporting EMI transition, including curricular adaptations in both content and language teaching, are likely to be more effective when implemented as part of a holistic and coherent system, rather than as a set of isolated and potentially inconsistent modifications to individual aspects of the educational process.

Recommendations for School Administrators and Methodologists

If EMI implementation is planned within a specific school context, administrators and methodologists may need to provide substantial support to teachers, encourage

collaboration among staff, and consider allocating adequate resources to facilitate the transition process. Institutional support can consist in providing access to educational resources, providing additional time for lesson planning and collaborative pedagogical practices by decreasing workload. School management may also need to organize supplementary teacher training within school settings or in external organizations. However, fundamental retraining in language and integrated pedagogical practices is likely to demand diminished workload too. Moreover, taking into consideration and supporting teachers' own opinions, ideas and initiatives could also be beneficial for the mild transition. Teachers are widely regarded as key agents of change; however, they are unlikely to be able to address emerging challenges in isolation, as this responsibility is more appropriately understood as shared among multiple educational stakeholders. In this regard, methodologists may be expected to develop context-sensitive practical guidelines related to lesson planning, pedagogical approaches, and collaborative classroom practices, taking into account the specific conditions of their school.

Recommendations for Teacher Trainers

Empirical studies conducted in all contexts across the globe, including Kazakhstan, confirmed the need for advanced teacher professional development in order to provide them with appropriate pedagogical tools supporting language and content instruction. However, the findings from Kazakhstani teacher training programs witnessed that they were often formal and with limited efficiency (Mehisto et al., 2022). Content teachers may require professional development not only in linguistic skills, but also in pedagogical approaches that integrate content and language, as well as in strategies that support the transition period by fostering academic language without compromising content delivery. This does not imply that subject teachers should be fully retrained as language teachers or assume sole responsibility for students' language development; rather, they may need to

take some degree of responsibility for linguistic aspects, particularly during the transitional stage, as neglecting these dimensions could risk limiting content comprehension and affecting students' motivation. At the same time, English teachers may benefit from recognizing that their instruction extends beyond language learning in isolation and can function as a means of supporting subject learning. In this regard, they may require additional preparation in academic English and in pedagogical strategies for teaching it, as well as in collaborative lesson planning and teaching practices to support subject colleagues in EMI transition.

Recommendations for Teachers

A significant body of research (Bedeker et al. 2023; Goodman et al. 2023; Manan & Hajar, 2024) suggests that teachers are often required to undertake a substantial portion of this complex work independently, frequently in the absence of sufficient training and institutional support. Despite these constraints, they appear to demonstrate responsive agency in implementing solutions to challenges associated with EMI transition (Manan et al. 2024a; Manan et al. 2025; Montgomery & De Costa, 2024). In this regard, the findings of the present study may offer a set of pedagogical strategies that both content and language teachers could draw on, even in contexts characterized by limited resources and support. Although many EMI teachers at public schools may already employ some of these approaches, a more explicit understanding of their role and a temporary positioning as both content and language teachers during the transition period may contribute to mitigating students' challenges.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study offers several contributions, while acknowledging its contextual and methodological limitations. First, it addresses a relative gap in the literature by focusing on a private school context, which remains underrepresented in research on EMI transition in

Kazakhstan. In doing so, it also brings forward the perspectives of school administrators, whose role in shaping and guiding EMI transition processes has received comparatively limited attention compared to teachers. Noticeably, Kazakhstani EMI teachers from public schools, even NIS, have expressed certain dissatisfaction with administrators' support (Karabassova, 2021). In addition, the study provides some insights into teacher collaboration within a secondary school setting, an area that has not been yet extensively explored.

Perhaps most importantly, the study attempts to move beyond an exclusive focus on individual teachers' coping strategies by examining internal school policies, curricular and instructional adaptations, and interdisciplinary collaboration as part of a broader, interconnected system. In this way, EMI transition is conceptualized not as a series of isolated actions or stakeholder-driven initiatives, but as a coordinated system of decisions and practices that collectively contribute to the transition process.

The main limitation of the current study is single-site case study design. The study was conducted in one private school in Astana, which limits generalizability. The findings reflect a specific institutional context that differ significantly from public schools, rural contexts and less resourced institutions. The context-specific EMI model with gradual EMI transition and additional resources may not be representative of broader national practices. Moreover, the participants included a relatively small group of administrators and teachers (seven participants), while other important stakeholders, such as students, parents and policymakers, were not included. In addition, the reliance on self-reported data may have resulted in discrepancies between reported practices and actual classroom implementation, while classroom observation data was not collected due to practical difficulties in research affecting minor persons and time constraints. Finally, as all qualitative research, the findings were shaped by the researcher's interpretive lens and, due to time-bound nature of

the study, they represent a snapshot in time and may not capture ongoing developments in EMI implementation. Despite these limitations, the study provides some valuable insights into how curricular and instructional adaptations are conceptualized and implemented within a specific EMI transition context, contributing to a deeper understanding of EMI practices in Kazakhstan.

Directions for Future Research

Future research could examine multiple schools across different contexts in Kazakhstan: public versus private schools, urban versus rural settings. This would enable more comparative insights into how EMI transition is implemented across diverse institutional environments. Furthermore, including a wider range of stakeholders (students, parents and policymakers) would provide a more holistic understanding of EMI transition processes. In addition, classroom-based research (micro-level practices) is needed on actual classroom EMI implementation. This would bridge the gap between policy, curriculum, and real classroom practice. EMI is a gradual process, yet most studies (including the current study) are cross-sectional, therefore there is a need for longitudinal research. Finally, future studies could explore alignment between English language curriculum and EMI subject demands, the effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) or CLIL approaches in preparing students for EMI.

Personal Reflection

This study's research purpose and research questions derive from my personal professional and research interests. As a language teacher I see that in the modern situation our role may go beyond teaching purely linguistic aspects or language as value in itself. This role has shifted to the facilitation of content acquisition through a foreign language, to the preparation of school graduates for studies abroad or in EMI university settings inside Kazakhstan and for global competitiveness in labor market. That is why it would be

relevant to deeper research how structured integration of curricular and instructional adaptations could improve academic English acquisition and mitigate the challenges of EMI transition. The findings of the current study need to be supported and extended by the lesson observation data and interviews with educational stakeholders, whose importance is not less significant than teachers' importance, – students. Generally, strong orientation to EMI transition and integration into global educational system that are implemented in Kazakhstan, despite all major challenges, seem very promising and valuable to me as in my own country most of the achievements of similar educational reforms have been recently reversed because of political perturbations.

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Appendix A: AI Declaration Form



Thesis Title: Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan

Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- ☒ with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
- ☐ without the use of artificial intelligence tools.

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used Open AI ChatGPT to paraphrase and edit the text for clarity and grammar¹.

I also declare that I

- ☒ am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
- ☒ have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
- ☒ am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
- ☒ have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and
- ☒ acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding appropriate AI use.

Name: Kseniia Zhuikova

Signature:

Date: April 27, 2026

¹ Examples: brainstorm ideas / find or select sources on a topic / paraphrase / structure and organize the written text / edit the text for clarity and grammar / ask for tips to improve coherence / cite and reference sources

Appendix B: Consent Letters

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the study: **Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan**

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on a research interview being a part of master thesis writing in the Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University. The purpose of the study is to explore curriculum modifications, teachers' strategies, and teaching methods aiming at preparing Kazakh- and Russian-Speaking Students for English-Medium Instruction in a Kazakhstani private school. You were selected for the interview due to your key role in the gradual and comfortable transition to EMI.

You will be asked to give an interview answering the questions on your professional activity related to EMI transition. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission, then transcribed. The audio recordings and transcripts will be stored securely in electronic and paper form and deleted after the project is completed. Your identity will be anonymized in any notes, internal reports and in the text of the thesis.

The information you provide will be used exclusively for research purposes, no commercial use is intended. Any identifiable information will not be published, presented, or disclosed either in oral or in written form. The text of the thesis will be then stored in the electronic repository of Nazarbayev University.

Depending on your choice it will be held face-to-face or in an online format by ZOOM or another online-platform of your choice. Based on your preference, the interview will be conducted either in Russian or English language.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 30 – 40 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

The risks associated with this study are no more than minimal. The names of participants will be changed by pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity and to protect confidentiality. The information about you and the institution will be coded. All the data will be kept in the personal laptop protected by a password, accessible solely to the researcher and their supervisor. The interview questions were diligently checked to be psychologically comfortable. Your decision whether to participate or not in this study will not affect your employment.

There will not be a direct benefit to you from participating in this interview, except for an additional opportunity for self-reflection and self-analysis of your professional activity and your role in the transitional educational model implemented in your institution. But your answers are valuable since they will help to develop a deeper understanding of how efficient and smooth transition to EMI can be exercised in the contest of Kazakhstan. Your insights can contribute to the development of a more holistic and comprehensive vision of the complex of curricula, methodological and pedagogical decisions oriented to EMI transition and the role of school administrators, curriculum developers and teachers in this process.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Associate Professor Syed Abdul Manan at syed.manan@nu.edu.kz

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the GSE Research IREC subcommittee at gse.irec@nu.edu.kz.

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐ I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.

☐ I do **not** agree to be audio-recorded.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix C: Recruitment Emails

Letter to the School Gatekeeper

To the _____ of

_____ School,

Dear _____,

A student of Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, enrolled in the Master of Arts in Multilingual Education program, Kseniia Zhuikova, kindly requests your permission to collect data necessary for research at the institution under your leadership in November - December 2025.

The topic of the research is “Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan”. The study has undergone a review by the Research Ethics Committee of the Graduate School of Education, and the research instruments and questions have been approved for use.

Sincerely,

Dean

A. Sagintayeva

Prepared by:

Participants Recruitment Letter

[Date]

Dear [Teacher's Name],

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study conducted as part of my Master's thesis in **Multilingual Education** at the **Graduate School of Education, Nazarbayev University**. The title of my research project is *"Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan."*

The purpose of this study is to explore how curriculum adaptations, teaching methodologies, and instructional strategies contribute to preparing Kazakh- and Russian-speaking students for learning content subjects through English. Your professional expertise and experience in teaching through English or in supporting students' transition to English-Medium Instruction (EMI) make your participation especially valuable for this research.

If you agree to take part, you will be invited to participate in a **semi-structured interview**, which will last approximately **30–40 minutes**. The interview can be conducted **in English or Russian**, depending on your preference, and **either face-to-face or online** (via ZOOM or another platform of your choice). With your permission, the interview will be **audio recorded** for transcription and analysis purposes. All data will be treated with strict confidentiality - your name and any identifiable details will be anonymized in the transcripts and final thesis. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or consequence. Before the start of the interview, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form explaining the procedure, risks and benefits of the research in Kazakh, Russian or English.

The risks associated with this research are no more than minimal. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your employment. Your participation in this research will be kept confidential. The interview will be conducted individually in a secure and quiet environment of your choice, or alternatively, online via a preferred digital platform at your request. The information you provide will be used exclusively for research purposes, no commercial use is intended.

Your insights will make a significant contribution to understanding how schools in Kazakhstan can develop more effective and sustainable approaches to English-Medium Instruction.

If you are willing to participate or would like to learn more, please contact me at kseniia.zhuikova@nu.edu.kz or +77054693100

Thank you very much for considering this invitation. I would greatly appreciate your time and contribution to this research.

Sincerely,

Kseniia Zhuikova

Master's Student, Multilingual Education Program

Graduate School of Education

Nazarbayev University

Email: kseniia.zhuikova@nu.edu.kz

Appendix D: Data Collection Instruments

Interview protocol for School Administration Representatives

Project title: “Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan”

Introductory statement

Thank you for devoting your time to talk with me today. My name is Kseniia Zhuikova and I am a graduate student in the Multilingual Education GSE program at NU. I am doing this research for my master's thesis and I will, probably, try to publish my research findings with my supervisor as an academic journal article. My research is about curricular and instructional adaptations to prepare students for English-medium instruction (EMI) and today I would like to learn from your experiences and views.

You have been selected for this study because of your important role in the school structure and the position enabling you to have a comprehensive view of all the curricula decisions aiming at EMI transition. I hope you could share some essential details concerning the system built to support gradual comfortable EMI, the role of curriculum modifications, of the school administration and of teachers.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 40 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. In order to facilitate my notetaking, I will audio record our conversation today. Do you agree to be audio recorded?

Before starting, could you please sign the informed consent form? For your information, only I and my supervisor will have access to the recordings and notes that will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, as noted in the consent document: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop and withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. This interview does not pose any potential risks to your work or personal information. The interview is planned to be conducted in English or Russian at your choice.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate.

Warm-up questions

- 1) How long have you been working at this school?
- 2) What is your current position?
- 3) What kind of pedagogical experience do you have?
- 4) Have you had EMI experience as a student, teacher or school manager before the current employment?

Main questions

1. Could you tell me about the general school policy concerning EMI?
2. What model of transitional bilingual/multilingual education was adopted for the school?
3. In what grade does EMI transition start?
4. How many classes of English do students have at grade 1, 2, 3, 4? At the secondary school?

5. What additional subjects that are partially taught through English do students have at elementary school?
6. What kind of out-of-class and extracurricular activities does the school have in English or partially in English for elementary students?
7. In what grade does full-fledged EMI launch?
8. What subjects are taught through English at secondary school?
9. How do content teachers integrate or support the linguistic aspects of their subjects, if at all?
10. What kinds of teaching materials and resources are used to support teaching content subjects through English?
11. How is the content of English classes connected (if at all) to the content of other subjects taught in English?
12. Could you describe how language and content teachers collaborate, if such collaboration takes place?
13. Could you tell me about the teacher training and professional development opportunities related to EMI and the gradual transition process in your school?
14. In your experience, what kinds of support from school administration are most helpful for teachers during the EMI transition?
15. What do you think helps make the EMI transition smoother for students and teachers?
16. Would you like to share some other ideas regarding EMI transition at your school that were not covered by the interview questions?

Ending statement

Here I am concluding our interview. I want to sincerely thank you for taking the time, sharing so much interesting information and answering my question in such a detailed way.

Your contribution is really valuable for my research. If any questions or concerns arise later or you recall anything else you'd like to add, please, feel free to contact me. Here's my telephone number and e-mail. I would like to insure you again that your personality will be anonymized in the research and all data will be kept confidential. Thanks again for your participation! I really appreciate it.

Interview protocol for content (subject) teachers

Project title: “Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan”

Introductory statement

Thank you for devoting your time to talk with me today. My name is Kseniia Zhuikova and I am a graduate student in the Multilingual Education GSE program at NU. I am doing this research for my master`s thesis and I will, probably, try to publish my research findings with my supervisor as an academic journal article. My research is about Curriculum Modifications and Teachers` Strategies for Preparing Kazakh- and Russian-Speaking Students for English-Medium Instruction and today I would like to learn from your experiences and views.

You have been selected for this study because of your important role in the process of transition to EMI in teaching content subjects. I hope you could share some valuable insights concerning your teaching methods enabling you to teach students with non-native-like language proficiency a complicated content subject. This interview is also designed to cover teaching strategies and your individual ways and methods to support gradual comfortable EMI.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 40 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. In order to facilitate my notetaking, I will audio record our conversation today. Do you agree to be audio recorded?

Before starting, could you please sign the consent form? For your information, only I will have access to the recordings and notes that will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, as noted in the consent document: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop and withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. This interview does not pose any potential risks to your work or personal information. The interview is planned to be conducted in English or Russian at your choice.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate.

Warm-up questions

- 5) How long have you been working at this school?
- 6) What subject/subjects do you teach?
- 7) In what grades do you teach?
- 8) At present, do you teach predominantly through English or through students` mother tongue?

Main questions

1. In which grade do you begin teaching your subject in English?
2. Have you had any previous experience teaching your subject through English before joining this school?
3. What kinds of special training or professional development have you received from the school to support your teaching in English-Medium Instruction (EMI)?
4. What types of administrative or institutional support do you receive for implementing EMI in your classroom?
5. How, in your experience, does teaching through English evolve from primary to lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels?

6. What core (mandatory) teaching materials do you usually use in your EMI classes?
7. What additional or supplementary teaching materials do you find most useful for EMI lessons?
8. How do you usually introduce English as the medium of instruction when you first meet a new group of students?
9. What teaching or pedagogical strategies do you find most effective in supporting students during the transition to EMI?
10. When students find it difficult to understand the content, how do you usually help them? (e.g., by using their first language, giving examples, or simplifying explanations?)
11. During your lessons, how do you balance attention between language and subject content?
12. Have you received any training in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methods?
13. Do you use any additional teaching methods or classroom practices that go beyond the official curriculum? If so, could you describe them?
14. How would you describe your teaching style in EMI classes? Do you think it differs from your approach in mother-tongue classes?
15. How do you take into account the different learning styles or needs of your students?
16. How do you adapt or differentiate your tasks if students in the same class have varying levels of English or subject knowledge?
17. Could you describe your collaboration (if any) with English language teachers or colleagues who support language development?
18. What kinds of methods or activities do you find most effective for helping students learn subject-specific vocabulary?
19. What challenges do you most often face when teaching your subject through English?
20. Are you involved in any extracurricular or out-of-class activities that include English elements? If yes, could you share what kind of activities these are?
21. Would you like to share some other ideas regarding EMI transition at your school and the role of content teachers that were not covered by the interview questions but you believe to be important?

Ending statement

Here I am concluding our interview. I want to sincerely thank you for taking the time, sharing so much interesting information and answering my question in such a detailed way.

Your contribution is really valuable for my research. If any questions or concerns arise later or you recall anything else you'd like to add, please, feel free to contact me. Here's my telephone number and e-mail. I would like to insure you again that your personality will be anonymized in the research and all data will be kept confidential. Thanks again for your participation! I really appreciate it.

Interview protocol for English teachers

Project title: “Towards English-Medium Transition: Exploring Curricular and Instructional Adaptations in a Private School in Kazakhstan”

Introductory statement

Thank you for devoting your time to talk with me today. My name is Kseniia Zhuikova and I am a graduate student in the Multilingual Education GSE program at NU. I am doing this research for my master's thesis and I will, probably, try to publish my research findings with my supervisor as an academic journal article. My research is about Curriculum Modifications and Teachers' Strategies for Preparing Kazakh- and Russian-Speaking Students for English-Medium Instruction and today I would like to learn from your experiences and views.

You have been selected for this study because of your important role in the process of transition to EMI in teaching content subjects. I hope you could share some valuable insights concerning your teaching methods enabling you to teach students with non-native-like language proficiency a complicated content subject. This interview is also designed to cover teaching strategies and your individual ways and methods to support gradual comfortable EMI.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 40 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. In order to facilitate my notetaking, I will audio record our conversation today. Do you agree to be audio recorded?

Before starting, could you please sign the consent form? For your information, only I will have access to the recordings and notes that will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, as noted in the consent document: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop and withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. This interview does not pose any potential risks to your work or personal information. The interview is planned to be conducted in English or Russian at your choice.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate.

Warm-up questions

- 1) How long have you been working at this school?
- 2) What kind of pedagogical training have you received?
- 3) In what grades do you teach?

Main questions

1. To what extent is the curriculum of English classes aligned with the curriculum of content subjects in your school?
2. How do the official school guidelines describe or define the role of language teachers in supporting the EMI transition?
3. What level of English proficiency are students expected to achieve by the time the full EMI transition takes place?
4. What kinds of training or professional development opportunities have you received from the school to prepare for EMI-related teaching?

5. What kinds of administrative or institutional support are available to help you implement EMI effectively for your students?
6. Could you describe the type of collaboration you have with subject teachers in supporting EMI?
7. What strategies, tasks, or activities do you find most effective for helping students acquire subject-specific vocabulary?
8. How do you help students develop the academic English skills that are needed for learning content subjects through English?
9. Do students sometimes come to you for support with the language aspects of their content subjects, or for help in understanding EMI-related tasks?
10. When necessary, do you ever use students' first language to clarify meaning or provide support in class?
11. What other strategies do you use to help your students build confidence in using English for learning?
12. When assessing your students, how do you balance attention between fluency and accuracy?
13. Do you use any additional teaching methods or practices that go beyond the official curriculum? If so, could you describe them?
14. How would you describe your overall teaching style? Does it differ when teaching students who are still transitioning to EMI compared to those already learning fully through English?
15. Have you had any training or professional experience related to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)?
16. How do you take into account the individual learning styles or needs of your students in EMI classes?
17. How do you adapt or differentiate your tasks when students in the same class have different levels of English proficiency?
18. What challenges do you most often face while supporting students' preparation for EMI transition?
19. Are you involved in any extracurricular or out-of-class activities that include English and are aimed at supporting content learning? If yes, could you describe what kind of activities these are?

Would you like to share some other ideas regarding EMI transition at your school and the role of English teachers in this process that were not covered by the interview questions but you believe to be important?

Ending statement

Here I am concluding our interview. I want to sincerely thank you for taking the time, sharing so much interesting information and answering my question in such a detailed way.

Your contribution is really valuable for my research. If any questions or concerns arise later or you recall anything else you'd like to add, please, feel free to contact me. Here's my telephone number and e-mail. I would like to insure you again that your personality will be anonymized in the research and all data will be kept confidential. Thanks again for your participation! I really appreciate it.

Appendix E: Data Analysis – Transcript and Coding Samples

Transcript extract

Azamat, vice principal for Cambridge program, mathematics teacher, 16.01.2026

- Well, let's begin then. Thank you very much for finding the time to talk with me. We have signed the form. I remind you again that you may answer only those questions you feel comfortable with.
- No problem.
- Thank you. Let's start. **How long have you been working at this school?**
- I have worked for three years. Then I had a two-month break, and after that I returned.
- Great. **This year right?**
- This year, yes, since November.
- You are currently in an administrative position. **Do you have teaching experience?**
- Yes. I taught for 10 years. And this year I was invited specifically for an administrative role. That's why I decided to try myself in a new position. But overall, I still teach lessons.
- **Which subject?**
- Mathematics.
- Excellent. **And which grades do you teach math in?**
- At the moment I only teach sixth grade.
- **And in sixth grade, is mathematics already fully in English?**
- No, no. In our case, in mathematics... Let me explain why I focus specifically on mathematics. Not because I am a subject teacher. It's because we have a state exam in ninth grade. In ninth grade the state exam and the subject Mathematics are mandatory. Other subjects are chosen by the students. Most of our students choose English, since it is included both in the state curriculum and in the Cambridge program. And English is English. But in the state curriculum, mathematics moves far ahead. Cambridge catches up with it, and when we try to cover both courses, there are certain delays.
- **In what sense?**
- Now our 6th, 7th, and 8th grades are... These are Lower Secondary Cambridge. According to the English (Cambridge) program, this corresponds to Stage 7, Stage 8, and Stage 9. Our program is more advanced. We teach it in Russian and integrate it with the Cambridge topics. So, it does not necessarily have to be Stage 7. Some topics we take from Stage 9. Right now, we are working with a kind of hybrid program. One lesson is in Russian, another lesson focuses on terminology in English. This already starts from sixth grade.
- I see. **So, in this way you combine the state standard—the Kazakhstani one—and the Cambridge curriculum, right?**
- Yes. The state standard essentially covers Cambridge mathematics. But our only issue is the language. The challenge is when the structure of the questions is given in English. All of this is practiced starting from the sixth grade.
- **And this state exam in ninth grade, is it taken in Russian or Kazakh?**
- In the language of instruction.
- Understood. **And is this school your first experience teaching in English? Or had you taught mathematics in English before?**
- I had teaching experience in Bangkok. I worked for four years as an international teacher. And before that... Well, I worked at NIS, but mathematics there was not taught in English. Since I only taught grades 8, 9, and 10, we did not teach math in

English. At NIS we had co-teaching: there was a foreign teacher who came, I think, twice a week and conducted lessons together with us. So, there were two teachers. In Thailand, in Bangkok, I taught entirely in English because it was a pure English school. And here, in my first two years, I taught Cambridge IGCSE, I had IGCSE graduating classes. When they told me I had to teach in English, I thought I would do it the same way as in Bangkok, but it did not work because the students did not understand. Now it seems that this barrier has already been overcome: even when textbooks are in English, the students no longer experience that initial shock. In the first year when I started here, they were only just beginning, so there were challenges like: “This is mathematics, and now also in English,” questions of that sort were common. Now these issues have been resolved.

- I see. We have talked a bit about mathematics; let's now discuss the other subjects that are also taught in English. **Could you describe the overall school policy regarding English-medium instruction? When does the transition occur, and for which subjects?**

- At the moment, in primary school we already have Space Science, which is also taught in a hybrid form. There are subjects like English, of course, but that is obvious. What policy are we currently considering? Starting this year, we signed an agreement with Cambridge, so we will now have Cambridge Primary. The first cohort for Cambridge Primary will graduate in 2030. This means that the current first graders, when they complete grade five, are expected to take an External Assessment, a Cambridge-based External Assessment. We do not touch grades 1 and 2. Why? Because we want them to learn to speak freely in Kazakh or Russian, whichever is the language of instruction. From grade three we will have Cambridge Primary. Grades 3, 4, 5 are Cambridge Primary. Grades 6, 7, 8 are Lower Secondary Cambridge. Grades 9 and 10 are IGCSE. Grade 11 is AS. And grade 12 is A-Level. That's how it is organized. Grades 3, 4, and 5 have not been introduced yet, but we expect that from next year they will also study in a hybrid format, covering both the state standard and the Cambridge standard. In grades 6, 7, and 8 there is currently a complete review of the curriculum to ensure our students do not fall behind the state program. So, it is the state standard plus elements of Cambridge. We aim for some level of overlap, and we are creating our own program, similar to the NIS program. We have already begun this work, and I think by September we will have some results. IGCSE starts in grade 9. But in grade 9 we cannot fully switch to IGCSE in mathematics. Only in mathematics. All other subjects are already fully taught in English. In mathematics we follow the state curriculum and prepare students for the state exam. In grade 10 we fully switch to English. I'm speaking specifically about mathematics. All other subjects from grade nine, that is, the IGCSE subjects, are taught in English.

- **Completely?**

- Completely. Then the 11th grade is AS Level. Since the AS Level program is quite extensive, and in one year we must deliver a very large amount of material to students, when they enter the 11th grade we have to abandon the state curriculum. To compare: in IGCSE one textbook is meant for two years, while in AS Level we must complete two textbooks in one year. The workload is heavy, and therefore we cannot combine it with the state program.

- **Starting from the 10th grade?**

- From the 11th. The 11th grade is AS Level, and students take an external exam. In the 12th grade they do A Level. In the 12th grade, students are already certified and attend only the subjects they choose.

- **For taking the UNT later?**
No, by that time they have already taken the UNT. Those who plan to enter local universities leave with the A Level certificate. Those who plan to study abroad stay for the 12th year. Some foreign universities do not accept students without the 12th year or require a Foundation program. This 12th year is a request from parents.
- **This is new information for me, how the 12th year works. Thank you. So the Kazakh state curriculum for senior grades is very different from AS Level?**
— In terms of mathematics, yes. In mathematics we go far ahead. But statistics in Cambridge is more in-depth. They have a whole textbook for it, and one of the papers students take is specifically on statistics. It is divided into Pure Mathematics and Statistics. There is also Additional Mathematics, a more advanced level. In AS there is also Further Mathematics, but we don't offer it because only a few universities require it. Our students mainly need three certificates and three grades to present to universities. Pure Mathematics is sufficient for most universities, the course code is 9709.
- **So, they must take mathematics, English, and another certificate in AS Level?**
- **In AS Level we don't have English. The main compulsory subject is mathematics. Why? Because we studied university requirements, and even if you want to become a dentist, mathematics is often required. And then two elective subjects. These are science subjects: biology, physics, chemistry. We also have a business track: Business and Economics. In the future, we are considering adding broader options, such as art subjects, but that is a plan for the next five years, not now.**
- **Let's go back to primary and lower secondary school, where the transition to English-medium teaching happens. Does the school have a name for this transition model? You call it a hybrid model?**
- **Yes, a hybrid model. Starting from the 3rd grade. Third grade will be included starting next year. This year, according to the plan, we started with the 1st grade, but it turned out to be difficult. We even ordered Cambridge textbooks, but the level is different. Our students were not ready. According to Cambridge textbooks, first graders must immediately construct sentences, do analysis, etc. We cannot provide that yet. So, we decided that by the 3rd grade our students will be ready for such content.**
- **And the current third graders, like my son, will they study the Cambridge program from the 5th grade?**
- **No, from next year, in 4th grade, they will already be included. Not exclusively Cambridge: we want to include Cambridge elements. And 6th grade students will follow the already established path - the hybrid program.**
- **So, students who joined in different years start English-medium learning at different times?**
- Yes. Overall, Cambridge is something new not only for our school but for Kazakhstan in general. Many schools claim they are Cambridge schools, but in fact they don't implement Cambridge. Our school is different: we are officially certified, we have the accreditation that allows us to teach Cambridge subjects, and we are a test center: students from other schools register with us to take the exam.
- **I see. And the number of English language lessons as a subject from Grade 1 to Grade 4 is five lessons per week?**
- Yes.
- **And in middle school, does the number of English lessons increase? Or is it simply the number of subjects taught in English that increases?**
- I need to check the exact number of English lessons. I can send it to you later, so I don't give you the wrong numbers. I'll make a note for myself.

Coding Samples

Table of Themes

Research question	Key themes.	
RQ1 School policies and curriculum	1. Hybrid curriculum model in terms of curriculum and language of instruction: 1) combining state educational standards and Cambridge International Program for Secondary Schools for STEM. 2) late exit bilingual model: L1 instruction for the first 2 years, gradual intro teaching only from grade 10 of all STEM subjects. Acceptance of bilingual teaching until upper-secondary and in certain cases high school. 2. Additional subjects outside state curriculum, taught in English or partly in English and early start of English classes and bigger number of hours, compared to public schools. B1 English as threshold for EMI transition, B2 is achieved in the process of EMI immersion. 3. Cross-curricular links and elements of CLIL pedagogy across different subjects. 4. School mission as preparing for studies abroad, hence universities admissions and career consulting at school 5. Final bilingual transitional model and original school curriculum are still in process. 6. Teachers: Strict requirements for teacher qualifications before hiring and high attention to teachers' role, including teacher motivation system. Significant degree of teachers' freedom in lesson planning, presenting materials and practicing. Conceptualization of the role of English teacher as a facilitator for EMI transition, teaching language as a tool for content subjects from primary school. Providing in-school additional teacher training and constant professional development. 7. Institutional support: providing access to main and supplementary educational resources, constant monitoring and consulting; EMI coordinators, methodological department, department of extracurricular activities, freedom to plan, supporting teachers' initiatives. 8. Positive pedagogy: caring for students' wellbeing and psychological comfort. 9. Various extracurricular activities in English, including cross-curricular international collaboration: teacher training, guest visits, participation in international school competitions, visits abroad of school employees for experience exchange.	
RQ2 Pedagogical adaptations and strategies	Subject teachers	Language teachers
	1. Conceptualization of their own roles as teachers: Content priority. Language as a tool, emphasis on terminology, comprehension, meaning making and ability to express and to convey content. Temporary focus on language at early grades and /or at the beginning of a course. Gradual introduction of English into content classes. + Assessing content and key terms, not linguistic accuracy and grammar. 2. Language beliefs and practices:	1. Conceptualization of their own roles as teachers: key role in the EMI transition, hence Key challenges: general adaptation to EMI environment. Balance of fluency and accuracy, attention to special aspects depending on task types. 2. Use of L1, especially in lower grades, absence of adherence to English only

	1) Mixed bilingual teaching even at higher grades in case of necessity, absence of adherence to English only pedagogy. 2) High attention to language aspect at secondary school, decreasing gradually by high school: glossaries, vocabulary activities, sentence starters and sentence frames. 3) Well-planned and structured Cambridge science resources and extensive bank of additional resources in English for science subjects, however language aspect (differentiation, additional materials, linguistic simplification of sentences and words) becomes teacher's responsibility. 3. A wide range of pedagogical strategies and methods: - Differentiation and personalized approach based on students' needs. Differentiation of English proportion depending on task types, on grade and personal students' levels. - Extensive use of scaffolding: visual, audial, videos, gestures and miming. - Gamification. - Sandwich method: English + L1 + English. - Careful lesson planning, lesson structure with engaging elements. - organizational and interactional in-class practices (pair, group work, self-assessment, pair assessment etc). - different strategies for younger and older students (pictures versus drilling) - Associations, analogies and cognates as a main way to memorize new vocabulary. - Simplification of language for explanation. - breaking material, into short simple parts, explaining in simple words, synthesizing. - CLIL techniques (gap filling etc.) 4. Key challenges: reading and comprehension of extensive scientific	pedagogy. Minimizing L1 where possible. 3. A wide range of pedagogical strategies and methods: - Differentiation and personalized approach based on students' needs. Differentiation of English proportion depending on task types, on grade and personal students' levels. - Extensive use of additional activities outside textbooks: videos, worksheets etc. - Extensive use of scaffolding: especially visual, also audial, videos, gestures and miming. - Gamification. - Associations, analogies and cognates as a main way to memorize new vocabulary. - reading texts with pre-reading and post-reading assignments; - project-based learning. - Dialogues, discussions, debates for fluency and confidence. - Contextual learning and not discrete language items. Providing students sentence starters, sentence frames, ready-made constructions, relevant contexts. - Additional reading activities for primary school: reading time, library visits, creation of pocketbooks for materials consolidation. Collaboration with library: classes in the library for reading motivation - - Emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and independence alongside academic English skills
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	texts and assignments, psychological resistance of students to EMI transition. 5. Strong focus on psychological comfort, confidence and wellbeing of students.	5. Strong focus on psychological comfort, confidence and wellbeing of students.
RQ31 Content and language teachers' collaboration	1. Cross-curricular links and interdisciplinary teacher collaboration as official policy. 2. Numerous cross-curricular links: alignment of English and science vocabularies, joint projects, building bridges with content subjects. English textbooks are strongly connected to other subjects and include CLIL elements 3. Planning of interdisciplinary collaboration in advance and on-going throughout the academic year in 2 main formats: 1) regular interdisciplinary collaboration: joint lessons; 2) Cross-curricular collaboration in form of special projects and events, including extracurricular activities. 4. Extracurricular interdisciplinary activities (debates, Earth Day, science fair). 5. Occasional help to students, not content teachers with language aspects of content subjects.	