

**Transition From Secondary School to EMI University: Understanding Challenges
and Language Strategy Use of Undergraduate Students in Kazakhstan**

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Abstract**Transition from Secondary School to EMI University: Understanding Challenges and Language Strategy Use of Undergraduate Students in Kazakhstan**

The increasing significance of English as the language of global commerce, tourism and politics has led to many educational institutions worldwide adopting English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in recent decades. There are few studies that examine how Kazakhstani students view and experience the transition from their native language (L1) schooling to EMI universities in Kazakhstan. This qualitative study aims to fill this gap by investigating the challenges, both linguistic and academic, faced by ten first-year students at a prestigious EMI university in Kazakhstan. All the students participating in this study came from mainstream schools where Kazakh or Russian was the main language of instruction. The study also attempted to capture these participants' strategic learning efforts used to confront their diverse challenges at the EMI university. Guided by Spolyky's (2004) theoretical framework on language policy and Oxford's (1990) classification of LLSs, this qualitative study sought to answer the following main and sub-research questions: 1) How do Kazakhstani first-year students perceive their experience at one of the highly selective EMI universities in Kazakhstan? a) What motivated the participants' to join this EMI university? b) What were the participants' academic and linguistic challenges at this EMI university? c) What strategies did the participants use to cope with these challenges? The data were collected from ten first-year undergraduate students studying at one EMI university in Kazakhstan, using two qualitative research methods: a written narrative and individual semi-structured interviews. The study found that the participants' challenges at the EMI university were classified into three interrelated categories: language-related, academic, and individual. To encounter these challenges, the participants

deployed a host of effective strategies, including both direct (memory, cognitive, compensation) and indirect (metacognitive, affective, social) strategies. Based on the findings of this qualitative study, practical and pedagogical implications were presented, by assuring the importance of providing students with psychological support, integrating academic English into the mainstream school curriculum, and promoting university writing centers. The study also offers implications for policymakers in Kazakhstan and areas for further research, including the emotional landscape of EMI and fair access to highly selective EMI universities.

Keywords: Medium of instruction (MOI), English-medium instruction (EMI), academic challenges, language-related challenges, transition period, language learning strategies (LLSs)

Аңдатпа

Орта мектептен ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университетке көшу: Қазақстандағы бакалавриат студенттерінің проблемаларын және тіл стратегияларын қолдануларын түсіну

Ағылшын тілінің әлемдік сауда, туризм және саясат тілі ретіндегі маңыздылығының артуы соңғы онжылдықтарда дүние жүзіндегі көптеген оқу орындарының ағылшын тілін оқыту құралы (EMI) ретінде пайдалануына әкелді. Ана тілінде оқытатын жалпы білім беретін мектептерден ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университеттерге көшу кезінде қазақстандық студенттердің өз тәжірибесін қабылдауы зерттелетін эмпирикалық зерттеулердің тапшылығы әлі де бар. Осылайша, бұл сапалы зерттеу Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университеттердің бірінде бакалавриаттың бірінші курс студенттерінің алдында тұрған түрлі лингвистикалық және академиялық проблемаларды аша отырып, зерттеу тапшылығын жоюға бағытталған. Зерттеу сонымен қатар осы қатысушылардың ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университетте кездесетін қиындықтарды шешу барысында пайдаланған оқу стратегияларын көрсетуге тырысты. Спольскийдің тіл саясатының теориялық негіздеріне (2004) және Оксфордтың тілдік стратегияларын жіктеуге (1990) негізделген бұл сапалы зерттеу зерттеудің келесі негізгі және қосалқы сұрақтарына жауап беруге бағытталған: қазақстандық бірінші курс студенттері Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде оқытатын ең беделді университеттердің бірінде оқу тәжірибесін қалай қабылдайды? а) қатысушыларды осы университетке ағылшын тілінде оқуға түсуге не итермеледі? б) университетте ағылшын тілінде оқытатын қатысушылар қандай академиялық және лингвистикалық қиындықтарға тап болды? в) қатысушылар қиындықтарды жеңу

үшін қандай стратегияларды қолданды? Зерттеу көрсеткендей, ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университетте бірінші курс студенттері кездестіретін мәселелер өзара байланысты үш категорияға бөлінгені анықталды: тілдік, академиялық және жеке. Осы қиындықтарды жеңу үшін қатысушылар әртүрлі тиімді стратегияларды, соның ішінде тікелей (есте сақтау, когнитивтік, компенсаторлық) және жанама (метакогнитивті, аффективті, әлеуметтік) тілді үйрену стратегияларын (LLS) пайдаланды. Осы сапалы зерттеудің нәтижелері негізінде студенттерге психологиялық қолдау көрсетудің, академиялық ағылшын тілін мектеп бағдарламасына енгізудің және университеттің жазбаша сөйлеу орталықтарын ілгерілетудің маңыздылығын растайтын практикалық және педагогикалық қорытындылар жасалды. Зерттеу сонымен қатар білім саласындағы саясаткерлерге ағылшын тілін оқыту тілі ретінде орта мектептерге енгізу бойынша практикалық ұсыныстар ұсынады. Зерттеу ағылшын тілінде оқытудың эмоционалды фонын және орта мектеп оқушыларының ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университеттерге әдіс түсу жолдарын тереңірек зерттеуді ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: оқыту тілі (MOI), ағылшын тілінде оқыту (EMI), академиялық қиындықтар, тілдік қиындықтар, өтпелі кезең, тілді үйрену стратегиялары (LLSS)

Аннотация

Переход из средней школы в университет с английским языком обучения: понимание проблем и использование языковых стратегии студентами бакалавриата в Казахстане

Растущая роль английского языка как языка глобальной торговли, туризма и политики привела к тому, что в последние десятилетия многие образовательные учреждения по всему миру стали использовать английский язык в качестве основного языка обучения (ЕМІ). Существует мало исследований, посвященных тому, как казахстанские студенты воспринимают и переживают переход от обучения на родном языке (L1) к университетам с английским языком обучения в Казахстане (ЕМІ). Данное качественное исследование направлено на восполнение этого пробела путем изучения проблем, как лингвистических, так и академических, с которыми сталкиваются десять студентов первого курса престижного университета ЕМІ в Казахстане. Все участвующие в исследовании студенты обучались в общеобразовательных школах, где основным языком обучения был казахский или русский. В исследовании также была предпринята попытка изучить стратегии обучения, которые эти студенты используют для решения своих проблем в университете ЕМІ. Основываясь на теоретической базе языковой политики Спольского (2004) и классификации LLS Оксфорда (1990), это качественное исследование стремилось ответить на следующие основные и дополнительные вопросы: Как казахстанские студенты-первокурсники воспринимают свой опыт в одном из престижных университетов ЕМІ в Казахстане: а) Что побудило участников поступить в этот университет ЕМІ? б) С какими академическими и языковыми проблемами столкнулись участники в этом университете ЕМІ? в) Какие стратегии

использовали участники, чтобы справиться с этими проблемами? Данные были собраны у десяти студентов первого курса бакалавриата, обучающихся в одном университете ЕМІ в Казахстане, с использованием двух качественных методов исследования: письменного повествования и индивидуальных полуструктурированных интервью. В ходе исследования было установлено, что проблемы участников в университете ЕМІ можно разделить на три взаимосвязанные категории: языковые, академические и индивидуальные. Чтобы справиться с этими проблемами, участники использовали множество эффективных стратегий, включая как прямые (память, когнитивные, компенсационные), так и косвенные (метакогнитивные, аффективные, социальные) стратегии изучения языка (LLS). На основе результатов этого качественного исследования были представлены практические и педагогические выводы, подтверждающие важность предоставления учащимся психологической поддержки, интеграции академического английского языка в основную школьную программу и развития университетских центров письма. Исследование также предлагает рекомендации для политиков в Казахстане и темы для дальнейших исследований, включая эмоциональный труд и справедливый доступ к престижным университетам с английским языком обучения.

Ключевые слова: Язык обучения (МОІ), обучение на английском языке (ЕМІ), академические проблемы, языковые проблемы, переходный период, стратегии изучения языка (LLS).

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The present chapter presents background information about the development of language education policy in Kazakhstan. It also introduces the research problem and purpose, the research questions, and the significance of the present qualitative study, which seeks to explore a group of Kazakhstani students' challenges when entering an English-medium (EMI) university from a first language (L1) medium high school in Kazakhstan, and the language learning strategies (LLSs) they use to cope with these challenges. This chapter concludes by giving the researcher's rationale for conducting the study and outlining the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Background of the Study

Kazakhstan, the largest Central Asian country, was formerly a part of the Soviet Union and was under the Russian language influence between 1920 and 1991. After gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan implemented various measures to promote and elevate the use of Kazakh. For example, the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, adopted in 1995, emphasizes the role of Kazakh as the state language, which every Kazakhstani citizen should master. The 2012 state program, "Kazakhstan - 2030," identifies the widespread use of the national language as essential for solidifying the country's unity. Moreover, in 1991, Kazakh was given equal status as Russian in all administrative spheres in Kazakhstan (Kulzhanova, 2012). However, although many measures were taken to revitalize the Kazakh language, Russian—as a former colonial language—has significantly impacted the country's language education policy. These measures, in turn, led to actively promoting bilingual education (Kazakh and Russian) after gaining independence (Fierman, 2006; Kucherbayeva, & Smagulova, 2023). Further, in

2006, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced a trilingual language policy integrating English as a third language. This language policy change process, similar to other post-Soviet countries, has been defined as “derussification and language shift” (Bahry & Olimnazarova, 2023).

In Kazakhstan, the widespread use of English as both a subject of study and a language of instruction is a recent phenomenon. Before independence, English was mainly confined to specific domains like diplomacy, foreign relations, international commerce, tourism, and foreign language institutes (Yilamu, 2017). This limited scope can be attributed primarily to the pervasive dominance of Russian during the Soviet era, which functioned as a lingua franca for interethnic communication (Fierman, 2006; McLaughlin et al, 2024). The official Soviet ideology actively sought to diminish linguistic and other cultural disparities between nations, aiming to create a unified state identity.

Nowadays, Kazakhstan’s education system operates through a three-tiered structure comprising primary (grades 1-4), lower secondary (grades 5-9), and upper secondary (grades 10-12) levels. All educational degrees are mandatory and free of charge in mainstream public schools. Reflective of its rich and diverse ethnic and linguistic landscape, Kazakhstan’s educational system serves students from various backgrounds including the majority of Kazakhs (73%), alongside substantial Russian (14%) and Uzbek (4%) populations (Sharimova, 2021). Notably, instruction occurs predominantly in Kazakh (49.8%) or Russian (19%), with a further 31.2% utilizing alternative programs such as mixed Kazakh-Russian, Uzbek, Uyghur, or Tajik language instruction (Sharimova, 2021).

Kazakhstan stands out in Central Asia for pioneering a trilingual education policy. The main purpose of this policy was to develop fluency in Kazakh, Russian, and English to

an equal degree (Batyrova, 2021). In Kazakhstan, the trilingual language policy assigns distinct functions to each language. Kazakhstan prioritizes Kazakh as its official language, while Russian functions as a bridge for communication between its diverse ethnicities. English, meanwhile, is viewed as a key to modernization, global participation, and economic prosperity (Ann & Smagulova, 2022).

Since 2007, the trilingual education policy and its implementation in Kazakhstan's educational system have been perceived as one of the main priorities of the country's education development. In 2007, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first president of Kazakhstan, launched the "Trinity of Languages" national program, as the first step to encourage Kazakhstani citizens to learn and speak all three languages equally (Melitz, 2016). President Nazarbayev also mentioned that "it is difficult to talk about the competitiveness of the nation without the extensive knowledge of English" (Nazarbayev, 2006, paragraph 70).

To successfully implement that program, the government of Kazakhstan has paid particular attention to integrating English as a core discipline and language medium of instruction for STEM subjects (Hajar & Mhamed, 2021; Kerimkulova et al., 2024). Related to this, the trilingual education program has been underpinned in many national policy documents, such as the "State Program for Education Development 2011–2020" (MoES, 2011); "100 Concrete Steps" (2015); "Roadmap of Trilingual Education Development for 2015–2020" (MoES, 2015); and "State Program of Education and Science Development 2016–2019" (MoES, 2016).

Integrating Kazakh, Russian, and English as a language of instruction for specific disciplines was the main priority of implementing a trilingual education policy in

Kazakhstan (AEO NIS 2013a). To illustrate, the roadmap of the trilingual education policy for 2015–2020 implies that four STEM subjects, specifically physics, biology, computer science, and chemistry, should be taught in English in secondary education. In this regard, Irsaliyev et al. (2017) reported that 20 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NISs) and 30 Bilim-Innovation Lyceums (BILs) were selected as experimental fields, where English was implemented as a medium of instruction.

The Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS) network, that was established as a pilot form of multilingual education has offered trilingual education since 2008 (MoES, 2010). NIS has partnerships with foreign educational institutions and invites foreign professionals to teach core subjects. In addition, NIS hires local teachers based on their English language proficiency skills. Regarding curriculum and teaching strategies, NIS has the autonomy to design a unique curriculum and employ Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL is integrated as the primary pedagogical approach, aiming to develop students' language and content knowledge simultaneously (AEO NIS, 2013a). Hence, students studying at NIS are provided with the best learning environment.

Bilim-Innovation Lyceums (BILs) are also considered to be among the most highly selected schools in Kazakhstan. The first three BILs were established in Almaty and Kokshetau in 1992 with the support of the Kazakh-Turkish Foundation (Hajar et al., 2023). BIL schools offer a distinctive learning experience by using two languages for instruction. Science subjects are taught in English, while social sciences are delivered in Kazakh. These specialized schools receive funding from both the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bilim-Innovation International Social Foundation (Hajar et al., 2023). Hence, BILs have better financial provisions as well as conditions that enable them to hire

foreign teachers and provide better educational programs.

Later on, The Ministry of Education and Science mandated the trilingual education policy across all mainstream schools in the 2018-2019 academic year, despite concerns regarding the absence of clear information and proven success from pilot schools (Karabassova, 2020). However, mainstream schools were not linguistically prepared for transferring to the trilingual educational model. Thus, in order to address teachers' linguistic concerns and provide teachers with updated teaching methods, policymakers set unrealistic goals for mainstream school teachers to learn English and take methodological courses for 6–9 months to teach STEM subjects in English (Karabassova, 2020). According to Manan et al. (2023), those short-term professional development courses for STEM teachers were found ineffective and teachers still do not have sufficient language proficiency. As a result, due to limited language skills, teachers experience frustration and lack confidence, which negatively impacts policy implementation in classroom practice (Mehisto et al., 2023).

The implementation of English-medium instruction (EMI) in Kazakhstan's higher education sector commenced in 2011. EMI, by definition, refers to the pedagogical approach of utilizing English for delivering instruction in academic subjects at universities where the primary language of the student body is not English (Macaro, 2018). Prioritizing content acquisition over solely improving language skills is a key aspect of EMI programs. As Rose et al. (2020) aptly phrased it, EMI offers a "two birds with one stone" approach, as students develop both subject-specific knowledge and English language proficiency simultaneously (p. 2150). Notably, in 2011, Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process, which allowed it to cooperate with foreign universities and organize academic mobility programs

(Turumbetova, 2014). However, it should be noted that Kazakh and Russian-medium universities significantly outnumber EMI universities in Kazakhstan. According to Mehisto et al. (2014), in 2009, Kazakh and Russian-medium universities formed 88.3%, whereas EMI universities comprised only 1.6% of universities in Kazakhstan. According to Karabassova (2020), the use of English as the primary language of instruction is experiencing a rapid surge in Kazakhstan's universities. By 2016, over 40 out of 125 universities had implemented such programs. Despite many optimistic policy changes and international programs that create opportunities for the proper implementation of EMI, research on the implementation of EMI in Kazakhstan's higher education revealed language-related challenges experienced by teaching staff and students, specifically insufficient language proficiency, content comprehension, inadequate vocabulary inventory (Karabassova, 2020; Tajik et al., 2023).

One of the major student-related challenges is Kazakhstani students' transition from secondary school to English-medium universities in Kazakhstan. Previous research revealed that Kazakhstani undergraduate students studying at EMI universities face several academic and language-related challenges, especially in the first year of their academic journey (Karabay, 2017; Kuttubayeva, 2022; Tajik et al., 2021; Yessenbekova, 2023). For instance, Kuttubayeva (2022) reported that first-year undergraduate students often struggle with understanding instructions and have problems with content comprehension. In another study conducted by Yessenbekova (2023), the majority of undergraduate students encountered several language-related challenges, including insufficient speaking and writing skills to perform academic assignments, a lack of discipline-related vocabulary, and language barriers in communication with professors and peers. While these previous studies gave some insights into the diverse challenges that Kazakhstani students

encountered in English-medium universities, scant attention was paid to the LLSs they adopted to cope with these challenges and the different contextual factors that impacted their choice and use of these strategies including their past linguistic background. Considering this, the current qualitative investigation seeks to bridge this lacuna in the existing research.

Problem Statement

Previous research suggests that the major challenges for higher educational institutions implementing EMI in Kazakhstan are the educators' and students' insufficient English language proficiency (e.g., Karabassova, 2020; Zhilbayev et al., 2019; Yeshengazina, 2018). For example, a qualitative study conducted by Yeshergazina (2018) in Kazakhstan revealed that 60% of 165 undergraduate students studying at an EMI university did not have sufficient linguistic and communicative competence to pursue their studies in English. Irsaliyev et al. (2017) also found that 97% of students studying in polylingual groups are proficient in English on levels A1–A2, which is insufficient to study in English as a medium of instruction. One of the reasons was a lack of preparedness that should be provided in primary and secondary education (Yeshergazina, 2018). This finding underlines the importance of close interrelationships between educational levels, especially secondary and higher education, to contribute to the proper systematic implementation of EMI at all academic levels.

Considering the interconnectedness between secondary and tertiary education in Kazakhstan, it should be highlighted that EMI was first implemented in secondary education, particularly in 33 Daryn schools, 20 NIS, and 30 BIL (Irsaliyev et al., 2017). Then, since 2018, more than 3500 mainstream schools have integrated EMI, which started

to teach STEM subjects, namely mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics in English (MoES, 2021). Notably, integrating EMI in secondary education in Kazakhstan mainly aims to improve students' English language proficiency (Karabassova, 2021). However, the reality is that pilot schools, especially NIS and BIL, have much better provisions and opportunities to successfully implement EMI in comparison with mainstream schools.

These pilot schools were afforded the unique opportunity to recruit foreign CLIL teachers and trainers, enriching their teaching staff with international expertise. Additionally, the schools were equipped with high-quality educational resources and teaching materials specifically designed to cultivate global competence and research skills in students.

Notably, because of selective nature of these schools, both teachers and students were required to pass rigorous entrance examinations. It ensures a high standard for both personnel and the student body.

Mainstream schools were not initially prepared for the transfer to the trilingual educational model as they lacked well-educated teachers, teaching materials, and an English-speaking environment (Tlemissov et al., 2020). It can be seen that although NIS/BILs and mainstream schools follow the same language policy, they have completely different conditions and provisions for students. This engenders a notable imbalance among undergraduate candidates vying for admission to an EMI university, as graduates from mainstream schools frequently demonstrate inadequate mastery of the English language. Moreover, subsequent to their enrolment, these students encounter a number of challenges in adapting to the EMI. This is the main problem: candidates graduating from NIS or other pilot schools have more chances to pursue their degrees in English successfully than their peers from mainstream schools. While some research exists in relation to the challenges that Kazakhstani students and teachers have while studying or

teaching through English (e.g., Karabassova & San Isidro, 2020; Karabassova, 2021; Yessenbekova, 2023), no empirical study has explored in depth the difficulties first-year Kazakhstani students from a first language (L1) medium mainstream school face' after enrolling in an English-medium university, the LLSs they use to address the difficulties and the diverse contextual factors that facilitate or hinder their academic experiences. This qualitative study appears to be the first empirical investigation to tackle this specific research gap.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The present qualitative study aims to explore first-year Kazakhstani students' experiences in the transition from mainstream schools to English-medium universities. More specifically, the study aims to explore participants' motives behind choosing an EMI university, the academic and linguistic challenges they face and the strategies they use to deal with the challenges. With the above in mind, this study seeks to answer the following research question and sub-questions: How do Kazakhstani first-year students perceive their experience at one of the highly selective EMI universities in Kazakhstan?

- a) Why did the participants choose to study at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
- b) What are the participants' challenges faced at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
- c) What are the strategies the participants use to cope with their challenges?

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study has implications for students, educators, and policymakers in the higher education field in Kazakhstan and beyond. The present study is the first one that has explored in depth first-year undergraduate students' experiences in studying in an EMI in Kazakhstan after completing their study at mainstream schools, their academic and

language-related challenges and their choice and use of LLSs. Therefore, the findings of this study can be particularly helpful for school graduates in Kazakhstan who are planning to pursue studies at EMI universities, and potentially applicable to similar contexts in other Central Asian countries. More precisely, this research offers students a broader perspective on the motivations driving individuals to choose EMI universities, the diverse challenges they encounter in such an academic environment, and the subsequent impact on their current learning strategies and future aspirations. Secondly, by examining the results of this research, educators in Central Asia can gain valuable insights into fostering effective methods for teaching English, both within and outside the classroom. This, in turn, can contribute to the cultivation of the desired self-image among language learners. Additionally, considering the findings, foreign language teachers working in mainstream schools might become aware of the English language competencies the students should possess to continue their education in EMI university. Thus, considering students' perspectives towards EMI education and their challenges, school teachers may implement some positive changes in terms of methodology and increase the quality of teaching. Ultimately, this can be helpful to address some difficulties that students encounter during the transition period from mainstream school to EMI university.

By implementing this study, higher education instructors will develop heightened awareness of the academic and linguistic obstacles encountered by their students. This awareness will illuminate the strategies students utilize to navigate these challenges, fostering a more supportive learning environment. Thus, considering the most common academic problems and students' LLSs, educators might make certain adjustments in their teaching approaches or materials they use to address students' challenges. This, in longer term, will encourage more students to pursue a degree in EMI. Moreover, the findings may

give some insights to teachers working at both educational levels on how to work collaboratively and develop new effective solutions and methods to mitigate such kinds of academic problems.

Lastly, the present study will give policymakers insights into the effectiveness of implementing EMI in universities and actual needs of students studying at mainstream schools to succeed in their studies at EMI universities. Furthermore, the findings of this study may raise policymakers' awareness of Kazakhstani students' expectations and aspirations regarding EMI universities, along with the diverse challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ. These findings may, in turn, prompt policymakers to re-examine their current approaches to supporting these students, focusing specifically on how to cultivate strong academic English skills

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis explores the experiences of students in English-medium instruction (EMI) universities in Kazakhstan through six chapters. Chapter 1 sets the stage with background information on EMI implementation in Kazakhstan's education system. It then introduces the research problem, the study's purpose and research questions, and highlights the significance of this investigation for Kazakhstan. Chapter 2 dives into relevant literature on EMI, its role in higher education, and the challenges faced by EMI students. It also explores theoretical frameworks from Spolsky (2004) on language education policy and Oxford (1990) on learning strategies to guide this study. Additionally, this chapter incorporates relevant research to broaden the understanding of student experiences in EMI universities across various contexts. Chapter 3 details the research design, chosen research site and sample selection, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis methods, and the ethical considerations employed in the study. Chapter 4 presents the key

findings of the research, while Chapter 5 discusses these findings in relation to the research questions. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the overall results, aligning them with the study's purpose and questions. It acknowledges the study's limitations and presents implications for future research alongside recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 1 presented the background information about the implementation of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education and described the problem statement of the present study, which qualitatively seeks to investigate the challenges encountered by a group of Kazakhstani students due to the school-university transition and the language learning strategies (LLSs) they use to deal with these challenges. This chapter conducts a review of the existing research on English-medium instruction (EMI) in higher education, focusing on the lived experiences of students from non-EMI mainstream schools.

This chapter is structured into six sections, commencing with an introductory exploration of the medium of instruction (MOI) policy and the global phenomenon of English-medium instruction (EMI). The second section outlines the challenges of EMI implementation in non-English speaking contexts from the student's perspective, focusing on transitioning from first-language medium of instruction (FLMI) schools to EMI universities. The third section provides an overview of empirical studies on implementing EMI in Central Asia.

Driven by the paucity of empirical studies on learning language strategies (LLSs) used by students to deal with the challenges faced while studying through the medium of English, the current research aims to address this gap. Accordingly, the fourth section will describe the emergence and development of LLS research. The chapter concludes by explaining the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, specifically Spolsky's (2004)

developing theory of language policy and Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies (LLSs).

Definition and Spread of EMI Worldwide

To explain the central concept of EMI, it is necessary to shed light on the concept of MOI, which is an integral element of language education policy and controls what languages are used in teaching content subjects and additional languages (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). MOI significantly influences changes in society, languages, and politics. To elaborate, Fishman and Fishman (2000) reported that, socially, MOI can be considered a highly potent tool in the maintenance and revitalization of a culture. Skutnabb-Kangas (2002) contended that, linguistically, MOI might be the most direct agent of linguistic genocide. Tollefson and Tsui (2004) asserted that, politically, MOI policy may privilege particular social and linguistic groups by giving them more political and economic opportunities.

Language selection for MOI is one of the most significant issues in language education policy (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). Liddicoat (2018), for instance, points out that the effect of globalization on the language strategizing of higher education institutions is observable across various domains of scholarly engagement, encompassing pedagogy and knowledge acquisition, scholarly inquiry, and institutional management. According to Tollefson and Tsui (2003), the choice of MOI can be shaped by political, social, and economic forces. That is, many postcolonial countries preferred to retain a colonial language because it tends to constitute the main way to develop relationships with other countries, maintain social stability, and successfully integrate into the world economy (Tollefson & Tsui, 2003). However, Hamid (2016) claims that globalization impacts MOI

language choice, suggesting that many countries worldwide implement dominant languages, especially English as MOI, which consequently led to the development of a new phenomenon of EMI.

Research on English-medium instruction (EMI) has been hampered by a persistent lack of consensus regarding its definition. This lack of agreement extends to the meaning, understanding, and approaches associated with EMI, as the concept continues to evolve (Shepard & Rose, 2023). Hellekjær (2010) defines EMI as ‘non-language courses in, for instance, medicine, physics, or political science are taught in English, to students for whom it is a foreign language’ (p. 11). According to Macaro et al. (2018), both the phenomenon of EMI and its practical implementation in higher education exhibit a certain degree of flexibility. For example, at the international level, EMI is seen in CLIL and ICLHE; at the national level within Europe, it is observed as a shift from EMI to CLIL. This fluidity could even extend to a smaller scale, where individual universities might choose to relabel their programs as CLIL, ‘CLIL in HE,’ or ICLHE instead of EMI. Observing all of these similar and overlapping terms, Macaro (2018) conceptualizes EMI as employing the English language for instructing academic disciplines (apart from English as a subject) in nations or legal domains where the native language of the main populace is not English. The major emphasis is not on language learning, as it is predominantly content-driven. However, Rose et al. (2020) underline that EMI “kills two birds with one stone” as it helps students acquire a language as well as content knowledge (p. 2150). Rose et al.’s (2020) argument aligns with the objectives of the present study since it seeks to uncover a group of Kazakhstani first-year university students’ experiences of studying academic subjects in English and LLSs they adopt to cope with linguistic and academic challenges.

The driving forces behind the infusion of English into higher education in non-English-speaking countries have primarily been political, educational, and economic reasons (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018; Lasagabaster, 2022). EMI is usually implemented in a top-down manner, which can be easily identifiable in various global settings (Dearden, 2014). As a result, EMI is occasionally perceived not only as an educational method but more as a political choice. Recognizing the potential benefits of internationalization, Su et al. (2021) identify seven major drivers behind universities' implementation of English-medium instruction (EMI) in formal settings. These reasons include enhancing the institution's global reputation, attracting a wider range of international students, fostering the development of international exchange programs, preparing graduates for the global workforce, gaining access to a broader spectrum of scholarly resources, promoting intercultural communication skills, and improving local students' English proficiency (as cited in Griffiths, 2023, p. 8). This point is about to be further explained in the following sections while describing the implementation of EMI in higher education.

Transition from L1 Secondary School to EMI in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities

Although the use of EMI in non-English speaking countries is becoming increasingly widespread, there is a dearth of empirical studies on the non-English speaking students' experiences in relation to the transition from the dominant L1 secondary school to an EMI university. As Macaro and Rose (2023) fittingly remark, “exploring the period of transition from L1 medium high school to EMI higher education” as experienced by non-native English-speaking students in Asian contexts in particular deserves further research to gather a picture of the EMI transition process (p. 264). Despite the lack of

universal consensus, empirical research has addressed this crucial aspect of EMI in various countries, including Italy, Japan, Sri Lanka, China, and Kazakhstan. One of studies on this research area was conducted in Italy by Macaro et al. (2019). This study explored the academic and language-related challenges faced by EMI secondary school and university students, as well as LLSs they used to overcome these challenges. More specifically, Macaro et al.'s (2019) study focused on studying 148 last-year CLIL secondary school students and 156 EMI first-year undergraduate students in order to compare these two contexts in terms of vocabulary size, potential gap in studying in English, the nature of the classroom interaction, and students' learning approaches. The study found that secondary school students in Italy did not have sufficient repertoire of vocabulary to adequately comprehend both general and academic English texts. This suggests that secondary schools are not providing students with the appropriate vocabulary size and teaching methodology to prepare them for EMI classes at university. In addition, the students in that study experienced a number of challenges, including difficulty understanding some lectures due to their *rapid speaking rate*, participating in group discussions inside the classroom, and writing their academic assignments in English. Despite these challenges, most participants in that study reported using a variety of LLSs to overcome these challenges. For example, some students who were fluent in English used some cognitive strategies, including taking notes during the lectures and guessing the meaning of new words. Notably, students who felt less confident in their English skills tended to adopt alternative strategies, such as reviewing course materials and learning the vocabulary for upcoming topics, watching videos on these topics, and asking their instructors to explain unknown terms or discipline-related vocabulary (Macaro et al., 2019). The authors concluded their study by stressing that while the transition from secondary school to EMI university in non-English speaking

countries can be challenging for many students, studying through EMI can be useful if students exercise their agency (i.e. the socioculturally mediated capacity to *act*) and use a variety of effective strategies to overcome their challenges to succeed in their academic studies and develop their English language proficiency.

In a Japanese context, Aizawa and Rose (2020) conducted a mixed study on exploring the difficulties that Japanese first-language (L1) students faced when transitioning from secondary school to an EMI—Tokyo University. Overall, 103 first-year undergraduate students from different schools participated in the survey and 20 of them were interviewed. The study identified the quality of gained secondary education as the most significant factor affecting students' adjustment to EMI universities. Students who went to high schools with EMI classes demonstrated a larger academic vocabulary and had fewer language-related difficulties when entering a university with EMI. This indicates that even some exposure to EMI in secondary school can make adapting to EMI universities easier. In Sri Lanka, primary and secondary education is primarily offered in students' first language (Sinhala or Tamil), while higher education is offered in either students' first language or in English.

In China, Lin and Morrison (2010) conducted a quantitative study on exploring the influence of change in language education policy at secondary school on EMI higher educational institutions. In this study, 728 first-year undergraduate students took two types of vocabulary test. The finding of the study revealed that students who attended EMI secondary schools in Hong Kong had a larger academic vocabulary size than students who attended Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) secondary schools. Moreover, students who attended EMI secondary schools also faced fewer linguistic challenges when transitioning

to an EMI university than students who attended CMI secondary schools. These findings also suggest that EMI secondary schools provide students with sufficient academic vocabulary and language skills they need to succeed in an EMI university. Similarly, Evans and Morrison (2011) investigated the challenges faced by EMI undergraduates in Hong Kong during their transition from first-language medium of instruction schools to EMI universities. Their research, conducted over three years, involved a questionnaire administered to 3000 participants and semi-structured interviews with 28 participants. The study revealed that vocabulary knowledge emerged as the most prominent challenge for the students. Participants indicated that limited vocabulary hindered their comprehension of lectures and textbooks, and **hindered their capacity to convey their thoughts clearly in written work and presentations**. This emphasizes the crucial role that a strong vocabulary plays in achieving academic goals within EMI environments.

In Kazakhstan, research on the transition from mother-tongue-based secondary education to EMI higher education remains scarce. One of the few studies that addressed this issue in Kazakhstan is the study conducted by Sadykova (2022). This study aimed to identify the challenges faced by Kazakhstani students during this transition, and revealed that most Kazakhstani students encountered difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, writing, listening, reading, and speaking. Additionally, it provided a clear comparison of the challenges experienced by students from EMI schools and those from Kazakh- and Russian-medium mainstream schools. The study indicated that students graduating from EMI programs benefit from increased exposure to English, leading to higher levels of proficiency prior to entering EMI university programs. This facilitated a smoother transition to the EMI university environment. Conversely, students from non-EMI schools faced a more challenging transition due to lower English proficiency levels, often

attributed to inadequate English instruction and limited exposure to the language.

Since the only existing study examined all students' challenges regardless of the language medium of instruction in their schooling, the present study aims to explore the challenges faced by first-year undergraduate students who graduated from Kazakh- and Russian-medium mainstream schools, as well as the LLSs they use to address these challenges.

Overview of Empirical Studies on the Implementation of EMI in Central Asia

As in other parts of the world, globalization has inevitably transformed language education policies in Central Asia, where English has been primarily implemented as a third language. Historically, during the Soviet Union, Russian was the most dominant language, and it was often the de facto language used for communication between post-soviet nations (Smagulova, 2016; for more elaboration on this point see Chapter 1).

Despite prioritizing national identity and elevating their indigenous languages following the USSR's dissolution, independent Central Asian nations like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan have retained Russian as an official language (Hajar et al., 2023; Liddicoat, 2019). After gaining independence, post-Soviet countries established bilingual language education policies and reforms to establish a balance between titular and dominant languages.

Implementing English in the Central Asian context is attributed to the increasing integration between local and international global markets (Ahn & Smagulova, 2021). Due to the widespread usage of English in the economy, most Central Asian countries have adopted a trilingual education policy, which requires school and university students to

learn three languages simultaneously: the first language (L1/national language), Russian, and English (Liddicoat & Kirkpatrick, 2020). Regarding the language planning for the appropriate implementation of English in educational settings, Central Asian post-Soviet countries have started to integrate EMI following examples from other foreign contexts (Hajar et al., 2023). However, it should be noted that each Central Asian country has established completely different language planning and policies for the sustainable implementation of EMI in education, considering the country's economic and political conditions and the readiness of educational institutions and stakeholders.

Kazakhstan stands out as the Central Asian nation pioneering a trilingual education policy. This policy actively promotes the use of Kazakh, Russian, and English as languages of instruction for designated academic subjects (Hajar & Mhamed, 2021). Kazakhstan's government declared several language policy reforms for a successful transition to EMI in secondary and higher education. The country initiated its national "Trinity of Languages" project in secondary education in 2007. This policy was followed by the country's integration into the Bologna Process in 2010, fostering collaboration with European universities (Karabassova, 2020). Since 2016, more than 40 of the 125 Kazakhstani universities have offered special bachelor's and master's programs in EMI. Since 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science has allowed school students to take the United National Test (UNT) in English (Irsaliyev, 2017). In the 2021–2022 academic year, more than 3864 mainstream schools also started to teach STEM subjects in English, practicing the EMI policy (MoES RK, 2021). Considering the above-mentioned language policy reforms and planning presented by the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, it is believed that the government of Kazakhstan is determined to achieve successful trilingual education while maintaining the significance of all three languages.

The implementation of EMI in Central Asian countries' higher education systems is a complex undertaking that poses significant challenges to various stakeholders, especially students. Firstly, Central Asian countries still experience linguistic challenges in the implementation of EMI. For example, Yessenbekova (2023) found that Kazakhstani students enrolled in polylingual EMI programs lacked access to a sufficient number of EMI courses, which significantly impacted the overall quality of their education. Additionally, the majority of educators and students did not possess sufficient English language skills for effective participation in EMI courses (Karabassova, 2020; Yessenbekova, 2023). Similar challenges have been observed in other Central Asian countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The research by Bezborodova and Radjabzade (2022) exemplified the linguistic unpreparedness for EMI encountered by both students and educators in these countries. This unpreparedness frequently manifested in the use of other languages within the EMI classrooms, leading to a dynamic environment of code-switching.

Some studies have pointed out the importance of secondary education in students' further success in an EMI university. Bezborodova and Radjabzade (2022) reported that students in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan faced significant challenges when transitioning from secondary school to EMI-based universities. These students noted that mainstream schools offered inadequate English language education, leading to academic and language-related difficulties upon entering an EMI university. Common challenges faced by students include limited vocabulary, communication barriers, speaking apprehension, and misinterpretations of instructions. Similarly, Eusafzai (2022) found that Kyrgyzstani undergraduate students faced the same language-related challenges when transitioning from Russian- and Kyrgyz-medium of instruction (MI) backgrounds to EMI

educational settings. Ultimately, these challenges negatively impacted students' academic performance.

Despite the linguistic unpreparedness for EMI classes and other challenges experienced by educational stakeholders, Central Asian countries have positive perceptions of EMI policy. For example, Seitzhanova et al. (2015) and Zenkova and Khamitova (2017) found that Kazakhstani students viewed EMI as a way of improving their English language proficiency, participating in the international arena, and preparing for the demanding job market. Supporting the findings of previous studies, Karabay (2017) found that Kazakhstani undergraduate students have acknowledged the career opportunities and access to international educational materials that EMI provides. Similarly, Baltabayev (2018) revealed that Kazakhstani students hold the perception of English as a *lingua franca*, underlining its critical role within scientific disciplines. Additionally, Kazakhstani students believe that English is one of the requirements in the international labor market, which gives them more career opportunities. Similar perceptions have been observed in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, where students associate English with prestige and economic benefits, serving as a means to secure good employment opportunities and financial advantages (Bezborodova & Radjabzade, 2022). All these Central Asian countries are in favor of EMI, as they believe that it gives more opportunities for social and economic growth in the future.

Despite the challenges of implementing EMI, Central Asian countries acknowledge English as an essential language in the international arena, science, and job market. Studies conducted in the Central Asian context regarding EMI implementation and the transition from secondary education to EMI higher education strongly emphasize the significant

influence of secondary education on students' future success in EMI higher education. Notably, almost all studies conducted in Kazakhstan have focused on students' challenges at EMI universities, with little attention being paid to the strategies students use to address these challenges. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap. In this regard, the following section will review the relevant literature about LLSs.

Language Learning Strategies (LLSs): Emergence and Definitional Issues

The term "strategy," initially used in ancient Greece to describe military maneuvers, has since found application in various domains, including business and education (Trendak, 2015). The field of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) emerged in the 1970s, with Joan Rubin's seminal work, "What a good language learner can teach us" (1975), serving as a cornerstone. Rubin (1975) emphasizes a key distinction: successful language learners (GLLs) are not only driven by motivation but also demonstrate a propensity to employ a variety of effective LLSs compared to their less successful counterparts. Chamot (2001) identifies characteristics of successful language learners, including active engagement in the learning process, self-monitoring of language production, consistent practice in communication, leveraging prior linguistic knowledge, employing diverse memorization strategies, and seeking clarification through questioning (p. 29).

Although the LLS field is known for its extensive output, there has been critiques regarding "fuzziness of definitions, weak theoretical underpinnings, and a paucity of methodological rigor" (Takeuchi, 2019, p. 684-685). The process of establishing a comprehensive definition for LLSs has been likened to "trying to get an octopus into a box" (Griffiths, 2018, p.21) or "stumbling blindfold around a room to find a hidden object"

(Ellis, 1985, p. 88).

Expanding on the concept, Rubin (1975, p. 43) defines language learning strategies (LLSs) as techniques employed by learners to acquire linguistic proficiency and knowledge. Rubin (1981) further refines this notion by proposing a two-fold categorization of LLSs: direct and indirect. Direct LLSs encompass strategies like monitoring, memorization, guessing/inductive inference, and both direct and indirect reasoning, alongside practice. Indirect LLSs, on the other hand, focus **on activities that allow students to refine their language skills and gain fluency in expressing themselves** (Rubin, 1981, p. 126–127). However, Wenden (1987) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define LLSs as specific techniques that language learners use to organize their learning process and improve their understanding, information processing, and learning outcomes. They emphasize that LLSs are highly individualistic and vary depending on the learner's experience, preferences, and abilities. Building on prior research on LLSs, Parks and Raymond (2004) posit that successful language acquisition hinges largely on individual initiative. This initiative is particularly manifested in the strategic use of LLSs and the learner's intrinsic motivation.

Oxford (1990) conceptualized Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) as tools employed by learners to facilitate the process of language acquisition and ultimately achieve proficiency. Oxford (1990) also emphasizes that early research on LLS was primarily guided by cognitive perspectives, focusing on learners themselves and their individual differences, with relatively less attention paid to the role of contextual factors, such as religion, politics, and social agents (parents, teachers, and peers). However, Since the early 2000s, a shift has emerged within LLS research. Scholars have begun to

acknowledge the significance of contextual factors as mediating variables that influence the selection and effectiveness of language learning strategies employed by learners (Hajar, 2024). The shift in LLSs is aligned with the “social turn” in education, which recognizes that learning is a situated and social process.

In this regard, Gao (2007) contends that there are two aspects of LLSs: traits and states. The former refers to using LLS without any particular context, whereas the latter represents the actual employment of LLS in response to a specific situation or a learning task. Therefore, LLS researchers who adopt socially oriented perspectives (Gao, 2010; Hajar, 2021; Palfreyman, 2014; Thomas et al., 2021) underscore the salience of adopting sociocultural approaches to understand language learners' situated use of LLSs using qualitative methods. Accordingly, LLSs with sociocultural roots can be seen as a result of the continuous interaction between learners and the social and cultural dynamics within specific contexts.

Since this qualitative study is underpinned by sociocultural perspectives on language learning, the researcher has adopted Hajar et al.'s (2023) definition of LLSs, which is defined as “an individual's active engagement in the language learning process within a particular situated setting to achieve their learning goals” (p. 3-4).

Theoretical Frameworks

Spolsky's (2004) Model of Language Policy

Three important themes emerge from this literature: governments' actions to implement EMI, students' perceptions of EMI, and students' practice of EMI. Bernard Spolsky in 2004 offered a useful theoretical framework for integrating these three themes

by examining them as language policy components.

Spolsky (2004) breaks down language policy into three interconnected components: language beliefs (LB), language practice (LP), and language management (LM). LB refers to the attitudes individuals hold regarding language choice. LP focuses on the observed language habits of individuals. LM, on the other hand, concerns efforts to deliberately influence both language beliefs and practices. As Spolsky (2004) suggests, a well-implemented language policy necessitates the alignment of these three components.

The first component of this theory is language beliefs (LB), which can be interchangeable with the term language ideology (LI). Elsewhere, Spolsky (2012) points out that this component explains people's beliefs and perceptions towards learning and using particular languages. Notably, LB is closely linked with the second component, language practice (LP), as beliefs and attitudes towards a target language drive how people use and practice that language in actual communication.

LP is people's choices and ways of using particular languages. According to Spolsky (2004), "Spoken language consists of concatenations of relevant sounds that form meaning-bearing units, which themselves combine into meaningful utterances" (p. 9). In this regard, Labov (1966) points out that employing different variations in the language system may not change the meaning that a speaker wants to express but may identify a speaker's origin and social level. In a narrow sense, Spolsky (2004) defined LP as "the sum of sound, word, and grammatical choices that an individual speaker makes consciously and less consciously that makes up the conventional unmarked pattern of a variety of a language" (p. 9). However, in a broader sense, LP is defined as a tool that identifies differences between levels of formality of speech depending on the context.

Moreover, in multilingual societies, it indicates rules **governing the appropriateness of each language in different situations.**

The third component is language management, which is characterized as efforts put forth by authoritarian members of the community to change the actual language practice. According to Spolsky (2004), language managers can be found in a variety of settings, including legislative assemblies writing national constitutions, national legislatures making laws about official languages, state, provincial, and local governments determining the language of signs, special interest groups seeking to influence national language policy, universities and businesses deciding which languages to use, teach, or provide interpreters for, and even families trying to persuade their members to speak a heritage language. However, the researcher also points out that language policy may not always be codified by authorities. Many countries, universities, and social groups “do not have formal or written policies, so the nature of their language policy must be derived from a study of their language practice and beliefs” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 8).

Oxford's (1990) Classifications of LLSs

Soruç and Griffiths (2018) indicate that “although strategies might reasonably be expected to contribute to successful learning for students in an English-medium environment, they are virtually invisible in the EMI literature” (p. 39). Taking a holistic approach, this study examines both the difficulties students encounter while studying in English and strategies they use to address the challenges. In this regard, this study is guided by Oxford's (1990) classification of LLSs along with Spolsky's (2004) developing theory of language policy. Rebecca Oxford – a prominent scholar in the LLS field – developed one of the valid and frequently employed classifications of LLSs. Hsiao and

Oxford (2002) postulate that Oxford's (1990) LLS classification is "the most comprehensive, detailed and systematic taxonomy of strategies" because it involves "the whole language learner" by considering students' emotional well-being and social interactions that play a role in language acquisition, alongside cognitive abilities. (p. 372). More precisely, Oxford (1990) proposed six groups of LLSs, which are also divided into direct and indirect strategies. This subsection of the literature review provides information about the six classifications of LLSs and how they are grouped into direct and indirect.

Memory Strategies. These techniques serve to obtain, store, and retrieve new information later (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). Memory-related LLSs include the following activities: grouping, imaginary, rhyming, moving physically, and structured reviewing (Oxford, 2002). Using this strategy, learners imagine the spelling of new words and connect the sounds of those words to remember the written and spoken forms of the words. Such techniques might be extremely useful to boost vocabulary while learning a foreign language.

Cognitive Strategies. These techniques are used after obtaining new information to analyze the process of learning a new language (Oxford, 1990). These strategies include reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, and practicing. Using these strategies, learners may observe the motivation for learning, progress, and develop future plans for improving their language skills.

Compensation Strategies. These techniques serve to help learners improve their language proficiency, namely in context (Oxford, 1990). These strategies include inferring meaning from the context while reading and listening, and using synonyms to explain new words. Using these strategies, learners may improve their vocabulary as well as their

language intuition, which can give them confidence in being fluent in the language.

Metacognitive Strategies. Employing these strategies can lead to more deliberate decision-making and building future plans for language learning (Oxford, 1990). These strategies include actively seeking opportunities to practice, meticulously planning for language tasks, regularly evaluating their progress, and closely monitoring their mistakes. These strategies force learners to switch on their cognitive abilities and critical thinking for improving language competence, addressing linguistic mistakes, finding appropriate conditions to practice the target language, and understanding the significance of the language in the learners' lives.

Affective Strategies. These types of strategies usually help learners stabilize their emotional states (Oxford, 1990). This approach emphasizes non-academic, self-regulatory strategies such as managing anxiety, self-encouragement, self-reward, and seeking emotional support. Learning a new language can be challenging, and these difficulties can lead to stress, a known factor that can decrease motivation. Therefore, such strategies can work to address students' well-being and maintain mental health.

Social Strategies. These strategies motivate learners to use a target language as a member of society and include the following social activities: speaking with native speakers, discussing, and being active in conversation (Oxford, 1990; 2011). Such activities help learners improve productive language skills and be involved in practice more effectively.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the main concept of EMI and discussed implementation of

EMI in higher education, transition from mother-tongue based secondary education to EMI higher education, students' experiences and perceptions towards EMI. In addition, this chapter presented Spolsky's as well as Oxford's theoretical frameworks on language policy and language learning strategies, and synthesized global literature on the phenomenon of EMI in educational settings based on these theories. Spolsky's (2004) model defines language policy in terms of three interrelated components: language ideology (LI), language practice (LP), and language management (LM). This was the most applicable theory to explain Kazakhstan's current language education policy, specifically the implementation of EMI in tertiary institutions. Oxford explored second language acquisition from different perspectives and established six groups of LLSs, which included all conditions that surround people.

Previous research on English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education, both internationally and in Kazakhstan, has primarily focused on the current experiences of faculty and students. However, there is a scarcity of research on the transition from secondary school to EMI university, emphasizing the importance of students' experiences prior to being enrolled at an EMI university. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap by exploring first-year undergraduate students' previous experiences and their current challenges in studying through EMI, along with the strategies they use to address these challenges.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on the definition and global spread of English-medium instruction (EMI), as well as its implementation in higher education and the challenges faced by students in non-English-speaking countries transitioning from first-language medium of instruction secondary education to EMI tertiary education. It also elucidated empirical studies on the implementation of EMI in the Central Asian context and explained Spolsky's (2004) theoretical framework on language education policy and Oxford's (1990) model of language learning strategies (LLSs). To achieve the aims of this qualitative study, the following research question should be answered: How do Kazakhstani first-year students perceive their experience at one of the highly selective EMI universities in Kazakhstan? To answer this main question, the following sub-questions are addressed:

- a) Why did the participants choose to study at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
- b) What are the participants' challenges faced at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
- c) What are the strategies the participants use to cope with their challenges?

This chapter describes the research design of the present study that employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the rationale for implementing this methodology, and to describe the specific data collection instruments used (i.e., narrative writing and individual semi-structured interviews). Additionally, this chapter presents the research site and sampling, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations relevant to this study.

Research Design

This section outlines the research design of the current study and presents a

rationale for the selected research methods. The current study used a qualitative research approach for several reasons. Firstly, a qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to observe and analyze things in their real-life environments, along with “attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Secondly, this qualitative research allowed the researcher to use multiple research instruments and collect “multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents” (Creswell, 2014, p. 45). Lastly, this approach allowed the researcher “to develop a complex picture of the problem, involving multiple perspectives and identifying many factors involved in a situation” (Creswell, 2014, p. 47).

According to Cohen et al. (2018), the selection of a research design is mostly determined by the nature of the proposed study, the research questions, and the research purposes. Considering the research purpose, a case study was chosen as the most applicable research design for the following reasons. Firstly, by using a case study research design the researcher can explore the phenomenon within one bounded case or system, which might be “an individual (such as a highly successful teacher or coach) or a group (such as a particular school, university, or school)” (Burke & Christensen, 2019, p. 7). Secondly, a qualitative case study allows a researcher to collect different forms of data, “ranging from interviews, to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2014, p. 98), which gives the researcher the opportunity to gain more information about the phenomenon. Lastly, case studies in education can be conducted to inform policymakers, practitioners and theorists about the outcomes of a particular decision making or implementing policy (Bassegy, 1999). Thus, employing a qualitative case study design, the researcher was able to study the implementation of EMI in

Kazakhstan's higher education through the study of one highly selective Kazakhstani EMI university, taking it as a one-bounded case.

More precisely, the multiple instrumental case study was employed in this research. This type of case study design refers "to studying something having lots of cases, parts, or members" (Stake, 2006, p. 6). The main motive behind choosing the multiple instrumental case study is that it gives an opportunity "to examine how the program or phenomenon performs in different environments and cases" (Stake, 2006, p. 23). Moreover, the combination of multiple instrumental case studies provides a comprehensive view, with each individual case study highlighting its unique characteristics and context (Shkedi, 2005). Regarding the methods employed for triangulation to enhance data validity and objectivity (Stake, 2006), the current study began by utilizing a narrative writing approach. This approach was used to gather background information about research participants, which was used to formulate interview questions and cross-validate the findings obtained through semi-structured individual interviews. The subsequent sections will elaborate on research methods employed in this study.

Research Site and Sample

The data of this qualitative multiple instrumental case study was collected from one EMI university situated in central Kazakhstan. There were three main reasons for choosing this EMI university: firstly, the university provides a unique academic environment for students as the majority of faculty members are from different countries and represent a diversity of linguistic backgrounds; and secondly, the target university is located in the city where the researcher lives and studies. Therefore, collecting data from that university helped the researcher save time and travel expenses. Thirdly, one of the criteria for selecting students at that university is obtaining the required score in the IELTS exam/ or

English exam. Thus, taking into account the distinct characteristics of this institution, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of EMI.

A purposeful non-probability sampling strategy was employed for recruiting research participants in the present study because this strategy is not aimed at generalizing findings broadly but rather focuses on addressing specific qualitative issues (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). With this in mind, purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to choose participants based on particular criteria (Patton, 2014). In this research, the researcher had specific criteria for choosing her participants. Firstly, all potential participants were Kazakhstani citizens and had completed their schooling studies at mainstream schools in Kazakhstan and did not take a foundation program, which allowed the researcher to obtain rich and deeper information about their own challenges while studying at an EMI university. Secondly, to ensure participant autonomy and minimize potential response biases, the researcher maintained a prior lack of familiarity with any of the participants before commencing data collection. This approach guaranteed their freedom to choose participation or decline involvement in the present study. Lastly, all participants were 18 years old or above and the sampling included both genders.

To ensure in-depth exploration of student experiences, this multiple case study followed Stake's (2006) recommendation of recruiting ten first-year undergraduate participants. These participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality, and their profiles are presented in the following table:

Table 1*Demographic Data of the Participants*

№	Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Hometown	Secondary education	Major
1	Alina	Female	18	Kazakhstani	Kostanay	Russian-medium mainstream school	School of Engineering and Digital, Sciences robotics
2	Ailin	Female	18	Kazakhstani	Almaty	Kazakh-medium mainstream school	School of Engineering and Digital Sciences, Civil engineering
3	Aigerim	Female	18	Kazakhstani	Almaty	Kazakh-medium mainstream school	School of Mining and Geosciences, geology
4	Arman	Male	18	Kazakhstani	Kostanay	Russian-medium mainstream school	School of Sciences and Humanities , biology
5	Almat	Male	18	Kazakhstani	Astana	Russian-medium mainstream school	School of Sciences and Humanities, economics
6	Kairat	Male	19	Kazakhstani	Almaty	Kazakh-medium mainstream school	School of Sciences and Humanities, mathematics
7	Alma	female	18	Kazakhstani	Pavlodar	Kazakh-medium mainstream school	School of Sciences and Humanities, world languages, literatures, and cultures

8	Erkezhan	Female	18	Kazakhstani	Semey	Kazakh-medium mainstream school	School of Mining and Geosciences, geology
9	Sanat	Male	18	Kazakhstani	Oskemen	Kazakh-medium mainstream school	School of Engineering and Digital Sciences, Computer Sciences
10	Aruzhan	Female	18	Kazakhstani	Almaty	Russian-medium mainstream school	School of Engineering and Digital Sciences, Petroleum Engineering

Data Collection Instruments

Two qualitative research methods were employed for collecting data in this qualitative study, specifically narrative writing and individual semi-structured interviews. Narrative writing was used first to obtain the necessary information about the participants' backgrounds, enhance the rapport between the researcher and her participants' information and construct some follow-up individual interview questions (Barkhuizen, 2008). The term narrative is defined as "a scheme used by people to give meaning to their experience" (McAllister, 2001, p. 391). Narrative inquiry, a qualitative research method, prioritizes understanding the essence of an experience or phenomenon over building a strictly logical or scientific explanation. It emphasizes capturing the richness and complexity of participants' stories. In narrative inquiry, the primary goal is to achieve understanding through interpretation, rather than providing an explanation (Kramp, 2004). It serves to be an effective way to undertake the "systematic study of personal experiences and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects" (Riessman, 1993, p. 70). Thus, using

narrative writing, the researcher obtained some background information about participants and their experience of studying through EMI, including the challenges they face at an EMI university and the strategies that they use to address these challenges. In order to support participants in the essay writing process, the researcher offered them a question set translated into three languages: Kazakh, Russian, and English. The questions were about students' English language learning experiences at school and their perceptions of transition from L1 secondary school to EMI university (full list of questions are included in Appendix B. The participant had the option to receive these questions either through WhatsApp or email, based on their preference. They were given 7 to 10 days to send them back the essay to the researcher.

Individual semi-structured interview was employed as the second qualitative research approach in this study. According to Creswell (2013), an interview is the process of constructing knowledge through communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. In qualitative research, specifically, interviews are considered “attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world” (Kvale, 1996, p. 1). In other words, an interview is useful to explore the participants' perceptions regarding a certain phenomenon that they are experiencing (Berg & Lune, 2012). This study opted for semi-structured interviews due to their inherent flexibility. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the issue from diverse perspectives while adapting the wording of questions to the flow of the conversation. It also facilitated the exploration of unanticipated aspects arising from participants' responses through the use of supplementary questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this sense, semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with the ability to explore responses in greater depth, formulate additional questions, and analyze non-verbal

modes of communication, such as facial expressions and vocal cues. These aspects, which questionnaires cannot capture, are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the subject (Bell, 2005, p. 157; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Adhering to Dörnyei's (2009) recommendations on interview question types and their order, the researcher constructed an interview protocol. This protocol, detailed in Appendix C, encompassed a set of ten questions with several probes. To ensure participants felt comfortable expressing themselves fully, interview questions were offered in Kazakh, Russian, or English based on their preference. With permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis, following Creswell's (2014) approach. Each interview lasted about 30-35 minutes.

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining ethical approval from the GSE Ethics Committee for conducting this research, the research tools underwent a pilot and testing phase to ensure the quality of the questions (Dörnyei, 2009). This evaluation involved a review by the researcher's thesis supervisor and the collection of feedback from fellow students at the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. The subsequent step was to obtain permission from the university administration—potential gatekeepers—to get access to the research site (Appendix D). They were contacted to the data collection procedure via email a month before. An email was sent explaining the study's purpose and requesting permission to interview first-year undergraduate students from various academic disciplines (see Appendix D).

Next, the researcher sought permission from the gatekeeper to send an email to potential participants. The email requested their participation in the study, which involved

writing a narrative essay and participating in interviews to share their experiences studying at an EMI institution. The participants were also sent an informed consent form via email outlining the research's purpose, potential risks, and benefits, as well as the procedure for withdrawing from the study. This consent form was made available in three languages (Appendix E). Once the participants reviewed and signed these consent forms, they returned them to the researcher. Following this, the narrative essay prompts, also available in three languages (see Appendix B, were sent to the participants via either email or WhatsApp.

The researcher then proceeded to the next phase, which involved conducting semi-structured interviews, immediately upon receiving the completed essays. Before conducting individual semi-structured interviews, all participants received a reminder about the study's objectives and their absolute right to ask any questions related to the study or withdraw from participation at any point in the data collection process without any negative consequences. The place for conducting interviews was chosen according to the participants' preferences, mostly in public places such as the university library, empty classrooms at the university and coffee shops. To ensure participant comfort, the researcher conducted the interviews in the language chosen by each participant, in Kazakh, Russian, or English. Through the semi-structured interview format, the researcher had an opportunity to request additional details and elaboration on the information participants had previously described in their narrative essays. To ensure participant autonomy, audio recordings of the interviews were made only with their explicit consent. These recordings were then subjected to analysis by the researcher, as detailed in the following section.

Regarding the arrangement of our planned interviews, the researcher and

participants discussed a time and day that suits the availability and convenience of each participant. The average duration of the individual semi-structured interview was between 30-35 minutes. The research data was collected between October and December 2023.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was complete, the information was analyzed and interpreted using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) guidelines for thematic analysis. The thematic analysis model suggested by Braun and Clarke includes six phases and is defined as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis is considered as a foundational method for analyzing qualitative data, as it equips researchers with core skills, such as “thematizing meanings,” that are transferable to other qualitative approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) highlighted that the advantages of using thematic analysis imply its flexibility and adaptability to various theoretical frameworks, research questions, sample size, and forms of qualitative data.

In the first phase, the researcher manually transcribed the audio recordings of individual semi-structured interviews to familiarize herself with the collected data. This approach, while seemingly time-consuming, aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2013) suggestion that manual transcription is the most effective way to achieve deep familiarity with data. Following their further recommendation, the researcher took notes and highlighted important information during transcription to facilitate the subsequent coding process. Following transcription, the researcher reviewed the audio recordings again to ensure the accuracy of the written transcripts.

In the second phase of the thematic analysis, the researcher commenced the generation of initial codes from the entire dataset using a complete coding approach. This method entailed the researcher comprehensively coding all data points in relation to the research questions guiding the present study (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This stage yielded several initial codes (see Table 2) directly relevant to the study's research focus.

Table 2

Code Samples

Interview extracts	Codes	Subthemes	Themes
There are many NIS and BIL students who studied English at school and have already read some books on biology and mathematics in English. However, I have not studied in English and have not read educational materials in English. My knowledge is about the same, but <u>I need to devote more time to preparation than the average student of NIS and BIL.</u>	Spending more time on studying than peers from NIS and BIL	Spending more time on studying	Academic challenges
There are no problems with the structure of writing essays. <u>There are problems with finding the right and more academic words.</u>	Face challenges in finding appropriate and academic vocabulary	A lack of academic vocabulary	Language - related challenges
I don't use particular strategies to deal with these challenges but <u>I tend to plan everything beforehand. I try to keep time-management. Also, if I have some questions, I always ask help directly from professors...</u>	Tend to plan, try to keep time-management, ask help from professors.	Strategies	Cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies

In the third phase, the researcher sorted all codes into three thematic categories for further analysis (see Figure 1). It is essential that themes capture the relevant critical information related to the research questions and “represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Beyond individual ideas (codes), themes represent overarching concepts that serve as organizing frameworks. In this stage, three main themes revealed from the data analysis: “reasons behind choosing an EMI university,” “challenges faced by first-year students at an EMI university,” and “LLSs used by students to cope with these challenges.” This limited number of themes aligns with the core principle of qualitative research: to delve deeply into a few chosen topics, rather than offer superficial insights into a myriad of themes (Creswell, 2014, p. 187).

In the fourth phase, the researcher meticulously reviewed all data extracts and assigned into three themes. During the refining stage, the researcher reread the entire dataset to assess the validity of each theme and evaluate how accurately the thematic map reflected the dominant patterns of meaning that emerged from the data as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

In the fifth phase, the researcher defined each theme, wrote a detailed analysis, and appropriately named the themes to reflect their content. In the last phase, the researcher wrote a comprehensive report demonstrating the research questions, methodology, data analysis, and final thematic map. The final thematic maps derived from students' data will be presented in Chapter 4.

Ethical Considerations

This research secured ethical approval from Nazarbayev University's Graduate

School of Education before data collection commenced. After getting approval, the researcher provided the respondents with the prompts for the narrative essay and informed consent forms that contained the details of the present study. This document covered the research's overarching objectives, the expected duration of the interview, specifics about how the data will be securely stored and utilized for subsequent analysis, as well as their right to withdraw from participation or decline to answer any questions they may find unsuitable, all without incurring any negative consequences (Roberts & Priest, 2010). More importantly, the study protocol excluded any questions that could address sensitive issues related to participants' religious, political, or sexual orientation. This ensured participant comfort, as this document guaranteed the confidentiality of participants' names and research sites. Students were also given the opportunity to ask any questions related to the study.

To ensure transparency, participants writing narrative essays were explicitly informed that their submissions would be used solely for research purposes and would not be evaluated in any way. They were assured that there is no predefined answer of 'right' or 'wrong,' or 'good' or 'bad,' with regard to their experiences of studying through EMI.

Before collecting the data and starting the interview, each participant was reminded that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any stage of the data collection process. Furthermore, along with obtaining written informed consent, the researcher also obtained verbal confirmation on the day of the interview regarding their willingness to be recorded. To ensure data security, the audio recordings and their corresponding transcripts were stored on a password-protected cloud storage platform. Access to this platform was restricted solely to the researcher and her supervisor. The

researcher will destroy all interview data obtained from the research participants three years after data collection. This action was taken with foresight, meaning that the researcher is planning to publish a paper based on this master's thesis.

The researcher has taken measures to protect the data of all participants, ensuring their anonymity, confidentiality, and non-traceability and safeguarding them from any potential harm. It is important to recognize that complete anonymity for both the research site and the participants cannot be guaranteed, as this information naturally becomes known to the researcher during the process of data collection (Dörnyei, 2009). Nevertheless, the confidentiality of the participants was protected by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and research sites, which exclusively serve as identifiers in the research report.

Conclusion

This chapter delves into the research methodology, outlining the chosen design, participant selection, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. Employing an instrumental multiple case study design, the research focused on ten first-year undergraduate students purposefully chosen through non-probability sampling. Data collection relied on narrative writing prompts and individual semi-structured interviews. The next chapter will unveil the study's key findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

The previous chapter outlined the research design and data collection instruments - narrative writing and individual semi-structured interviews utilized in this qualitative study. It further discussed the thematic data analysis framework employed, drawing on the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Additionally, Chapter 3 described the data analysis, the criteria for recruiting participants in this study, and the study's ethical considerations. The present chapter synthesizes and presents key findings based on the data collected from 10 participants, who are first-year undergraduate students and had graduated from Kazakh- or Russian medium mainstream schools in Kazakhstan before enrolling at an EMI university directly without taking a foundation program. The present study aims to address the following research question: How do Kazakhstani first-year students perceive their experience at one of the highly selective EMI universities in Kazakhstan? To answer this main question, the following sub-questions need to be addressed:

- a) Why did the participants choose to study at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
- b) What are the participants' challenges faced at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
- c) What are the strategies the participants use to cope with their challenges?

The subsequent section will present the research participants' biographical accounts based on their narrative essays. This will be followed by a description of participants' motives behind choosing an EMI university, challenges that they face studying at an EMI university, and LLSs that they employ to address these challenges according to the key themes and subthemes that revealed from the data analysis process (see Figures 1, 2, 3 thematic maps in Chapter 4).

Biographical Vignettes of the Research Participants

This section presents the nine participants' biographical vignettes based on their written narrative essays about their experiences of studying at an EMI university without prior exposure to EMI.

Aigerim

Aigerim is a first-year undergraduate student who graduated from a Kazakh-medium mainstream school in Almaty and is enrolled at this EMI university. She is majoring in geology at the School of Mining and Geosciences. She grew up with her parents and her younger brother. Her father is the only breadwinner in their family and works in the field of sales of digital technology. Aigerim started learning English in grades 6-7 while preparing for an NIS entrance exam. However, as she did not pass that exam, her motivation to learn English declined, especially since she was not satisfied with work of her English teachers at school which was based on repetition and rote learning. She argued that the knowledge obtained at school was insufficient for passing the IELTS or SAT exams.

At the beginning of 10th grade, Aigerim's motivation towards learning English was kindled due to her aspirations to enroll at a highly selective EMI university in Kazakhstan and enhance her knowledge in Space Physics by reading relevant resources in English. Aigerim indicated that her parents provided her with financial and emotional support including financing her private supplementary tutoring in English. Despite investing considerable time and effort into learning English, Aigerim reported some linguistic challenges after joining the EMI university including her limited academic vocabulary and its appropriate contextual usage. Additionally, she recognizes that she has some difficulties

in academic writing, especially in presenting arguments and following the structure of academic writing. However, she believes that stability and consistency of learning are critical factors in language acquisition.

Ailin

Ailin is a first-year undergraduate student who graduated from a Kazakh-medium mainstream school in Almaty and entered this EMI university. Since primary school, Ailin has been interested in urbanization, city planning, construction, and sustainability, so she decided to do her bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering at this university. Ailin came from a large family of six members: parents and four children. She was born and grew up in a small town near Almaty, where she received her primary education. During grades 1 to 4, she had no chance to learn English at school, as her primary school did not provide English as a compulsory subject. After moving to an urban area in Almaty in grade 5, she started learning English at her new school. Thus, in order to be at the same level as classmates who had previously studied English at their primary school, she had to attend English private tutoring. In grade 8, she acknowledged the role English played in her life, as she became highly motivated to complete her study abroad. Thus, she started intensive self-learning and continued to receive private tutoring.

After entering the Civil Engineering program at this university, Ailin became capable of identifying her strengths and weaknesses in English. She realized that speaking was particularly challenging for her. More specifically, she sometimes lacked confidence and feared making mistakes while conversing in English. Initially, she was afraid of not being understood by university instructors. She indicated that she adopted some strategies to encounter this challenge including reading more books to widen her vocabulary

inventory and self-talk to enhance her self-confidence.

Arman

Arman is a first-year undergraduate student who completed his schooling at a Russian-medium mainstream school in Kostanay, the northern part of Kazakhstan. He was studying for his bachelor's degree in biological sciences at this EMI university. He is an only child and was raised by philosophy professors. His father instructed him in basic grammar patterns, the alphabet, and constructing simple sentences. However, Arman started to learn English more deeply at the age of 13, when he recognized the importance of English, and hence, began attending private English courses. He realized that English is a key to accessing knowledge and to broaden his horizon in the modern world. Therefore, he attended English private classes to boost his language proficiency and prepare for the university entrance exams.

Although Arman spent many years learning English, he mentioned some challenges he faced after joining the EMI university especially while working on his academic writing assignments in English. Some examples of these challenges were creating complex and comprehensive sentences and formulating statements more accurately. In order to address these challenges, he started practicing writing more frequently and sometimes asking for help from specialists at the writing center at the university.

Sanat

Sanat is a first-year undergraduate student majoring in computer science at this EMI university. He grew up in a small family of 4 people including him and graduated from a Kazakh-medium mainstream school in Oskemen, the eastern part of Kazakhstan.

He started learning English in primary school as a compulsory subject. However, as English teaching at school was low quality, he decided to find an English tutor to facilitate the English language learning process. He pointed out that the school program was rushed and did not provide sufficient time to understand and practice a new topic/ grammar pattern. He was motivated to acquire English to get access to English-speaking materials and videos about computer sciences and programming.

Although Sanat was able to pass IELTS and SAT and enrolled in the EMI university, he reported some linguistic difficulties, including formulating complicated scientific sentences and participating in academic discussions because of his insufficient academic vocabulary. He also had difficulties presenting arguments clearly and precisely in academic writing while working on his academic assignments. To address these language-related challenges, he used some useful strategies to boost his academic vocabulary and learn more grammar patterns by reading research papers and academic books. Moreover, he integrated some activities such as listening to music and watching videos into his daily routine.

Alma

Alma is a first-year undergraduate student, majoring in world language, linguistics, and cultures at the same EMI university. She grew up in a military family and graduated from a Kazakh-medium mainstream school in Pavlodar, the north-eastern part of Kazakhstan. Alma began learning English in primary school in the 2nd grade, and then in grade 6, she started participating in the English Language Olympiad. Although Alma was good at English, she did not like learning English at school mainly due to her English language teacher's traditional and boring teaching methods. Nevertheless, seeking a more

rewarding learning experience, Alma received English private tutoring between grades 6 and 9, which significantly boosted her language proficiency and allowed her to pass the IELTS and SAT. Nevertheless, Alma reported some challenges with academic writing at this EMI university, mainly due to the demand for specialized vocabulary. Alma used artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT and Quillbot to address these challenges, primarily for paraphrasing and identifying more academic word alternatives.

Alina

Alina is a first-year undergraduate student, majoring in Robotics at this EMI university. She grew up in Kostanay and graduated from a Kazakh-medium mainstream school. Alma started learning English in the 2nd grade at school but did not recognize the importance of English at that time. Then, she started learning English more deeply in grade 9 as it was necessary to pass the IELTS and SAT to enroll in a top EMI university in Kazakhstan. As she was not satisfied with the quality of teaching English at school, she sought English private tutoring. Thus, she could enter this EMI university by receiving coaching on the IELTS and SAT tests.

After enrolling in the EMI university, she encountered some challenges, especially in speaking. She stated that anxiety and a fear of making mistakes in front of her peers and instructors hindered her ability to participate in classroom discussions. Alina attributes these difficulties to a lack of confidence, mainly when surrounded by peers from elite schools like NIS and BIL. Although she did not employ several strategies to deal with this challenge, she indicated that she had a plan to encourage herself and practice her English with some peers to gradually improve her speaking skills.

Erkezhan

Erkezhan is a first-year student, majoring in geology at the EMI university. She grew up and graduated from a Kazakh-medium mainstream school in Semey. Although Erkezhan started learning English at primary school in the 3rd grade as a compulsory subject, she got interested in English and started learning it in depth in grade 9. However, since her family could not afford private lessons and the quality of teaching English at school was low, she found free English language courses online. She asserted that the knowledge given at school is not enough to enroll even at Kazakhstani state universities, as lesson plans focused mainly on teaching grammar patterns without giving sufficient explanation or examples about the context of using these rules. Thus, having passed the IELTS and SAT with the minimum score, she was able to enroll at that university. At university, Erkezhan faced problems with reading and writing academic papers. Therefore, she decided to invest more time in reading and analyzing research papers to address these challenges. Additionally, she regularly wrote several drafts of academic essays to refine their structure and practice APA referencing.

Aruzhan

Aruzhan is a first-year undergraduate student, majoring in Petroleum Engineering at this EMI university. She completed her education at a mainstream Kazakh-medium school in Almaty. Although Aruzhan started learning English in the 2nd grade as a core subject at school, she became interested in learning English in the 9th grade when she had to decide on university and future specialty. As Aruzhan was not satisfied with the quality of teaching English at school, she sought private English tutoring. Although Aruzhan has invested much time and effort in learning English and passing international exams, she still

had some difficulties in speaking English at university. As a result, as she lacked opportunities to practice her English, she did not feel confident in her skills and knowledge and experienced anxiety while speaking English. To address these challenges, she capitalized on the opportunities of practicing her English with international students, participating in classroom discussions, and asking questions to her instructors at university.

Almat

Almat is a first-year undergraduate student, majoring in economics at this EMI university. He started learning English in the 2nd grade at primary school but invested in learning English in the grade 6 while preparing for a NIS entrance exam. However, as he could not enter NIS, his motivation towards learning English declined. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Almat's brother regularly introduced him to entertaining English-language videos while emphasizing the growing importance of English on social media platforms, particularly TikTok. Thus, he became interested in English content on social media, which encouraged him to pursue learning that language. Being motivated to learn English, he started receiving English private tutoring, as English teachers at school had unfair attitudes towards students and tried to help only those already good in English. Thus, he could pass the IELTS and SAT by combining private tutoring and self-learning. His initial goal was to continue studying in the United States. However, as he could not achieve this goal, he decided to stay and choose this EMI university. Despite Almat's strong motivation to learn English and his success in reaching an advanced level, he encountered challenges at this university regarding using and explaining discipline-specific terminology. To address these challenges, he started reading more academic papers and paraphrasing to understand difficult terms using simple language.

Kairat

Kairat is a first-year undergraduate student, majoring in economics at this EMI university. He studied at a Russian-medium mainstream school in Almaty. Dissatisfied with the school's English teachers, Kairat's parents enrolled him in English private tutoring in the 2nd grade. Kairat dedicated himself to these tutorial sessions for seven years, reaching upper-intermediate proficiency and passing the IELTS and SAT. Although Kairat has been learning English since childhood, he recognized its importance in the higher grades as there was a common tendency to enter EMI University to get a high-quality education and the best job opportunities. Thus, with high grades, he passed IELTS and TOEFL and joined this university.

Kairat encountered some language-related difficulties at university. Firstly, his lack of experience in academic writing made it challenging to structure and vocabulary-rich academic essays. Secondly, having never learned citing and referencing, he found following APA guidelines challenging. To address these challenges, Kairat actively participated in webinars organized by instructors in the writing center of his university and engaged in various academic writing practices. He firmly believes consistent practice is the key to perfecting his academic writing skills.

Interpreting the Participants' Experiential Accounts

This section is organized around the main four themes revealed from the analysis of the interview data: These themes are (1) reasons behind choosing an EMI university; (2) first-year students' challenges; (3) LLSs used by students.

Reasons behind Choosing an EMI University

The data analysis revealed three driving reasons behind students' choice to attend

an EMI university: academic reasons, career-related reasons, and personal reasons. These reasons are given in the thematic map (see Figure 1) and explained further in detail.

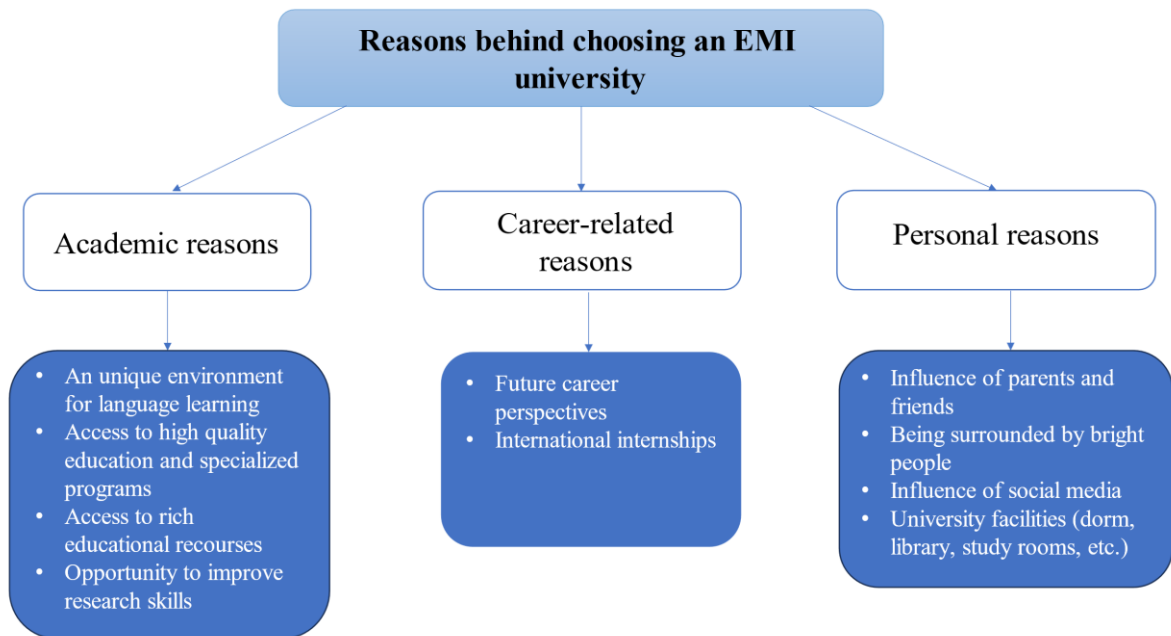


Figure 1. Thematic map derived from the participants' data on their motives for choosing an EMI university

Academic Reasons

Analysis of interview data highlighted four primary academic reasons justifying participants' choice of an EMI university: a unique language learning environment, access to scholarly literature and resources, high-quality education and specialized programs, and acquiring research skills.

Data analysis showed that seven out of ten participants were primarily motivated by the immersive English-speaking environment provided by EMI universities. Participants reported that studying in such an environment offered them not only the benefit of EMI but also the opportunity for regular communication with international instructors and students.

This, they described, fostered a rich language learning experience, where diverse accents and field-specific vocabulary exposure significantly enhanced their English proficiency.

This point can be seen in the following extracts given by Alina and Aruzhan.

Extract 1:

First of all, I chose this EMI university to improve my language skills. Here, I read books and perform all assignments in English. More importantly, I have to communicate with international professors and students only in English. So, I would say that this definitely positively impacts my language skills, especially boosting my vocabulary (Alina, November 3, 2023).

As shown above, most participants chose this EMI university because of the opportunity to be exposed to the English-speaking community and improve their language skills. Additionally, five participants (Ailin, Aigerim, Aruzhan, Arman, Alma) acknowledged that EMI universities not only positively influence the language development but also help students get access to scholarly literature. These participants stated that after entering an EMI university they got access to the most reliable educational resources, which are originally written in English. Several participants highlighted that they had limited access to trustworthy information and literature in Kazakh and Russian during the school years. Consequently, this limited availability motivated them to continue their studies in English, in order to expand their knowledge base. This reason can be observed in the following extracts:

Extract 2:

It is easier for me to study through EMI than in Kazakh and Russian because everything is more reliable in English. It should be recognized that there is little

information in the Kazakh language. But in English, I can find any materials and books that help me expand my knowledge (Ailin, November 15, 2023).

Extract 3:

There are limited resources in Kazakh, especially about space. I remember, when I was studying at school, I searched some materials about space in Kazakh and there were only a few books and articles. Then I realized that I can find everything about it in English. So, English gives access to any information (Aigerim, November 3, 2023).

Another important reason is high-quality education and specialized programs provided by the university. Half of the participants acknowledged that they chose an EMI university as it is believed that EMI universities provide high-quality education. Two participants (Almat and Aruzhan) highlighted the fact that EMI universities offer some specialized international programs, such as Robotics and Petroleum Engineering, which are not provided by other state universities. These points are depicted in Extracts 5 and 6:

Extract 4:

Before applying, I found a specialty that interested me. I discussed this with my parents and they supported my choice. But then I realized that the state universities do not provide a petroleum engineering program. Then I opened the website of this university and found that it is the only university in Kazakhstan offering this program. I was happy and decided to apply (Aruzhan, November 12, 2023).

Another reason for enrolling at an EMI university is the high interest of some participants in conducting research. Four participants who had experience of conducting research at school (Aruzhan, Arman, Erkezhan, Aigerim) acknowledged that they were

mostly driven by the desire to expand their knowledge about international research and acquire research skills. Extracts 7 and 8 fittingly elucidate this idea.

Extract 5:

In high school, I became interested in science and started to conduct small-scale studies. Therefore, by the 11th grade, I started looking for a research university that provides high-quality education. I chose this university because I wanted to continue working on my school projects and improve my research skills (Aruzhan, November 12, 2023).

Through interview data analysis, a distinct cluster of academic reasons emerged to explain participants' preference for EMI universities. This cluster encompasses four key factors influencing their choice. Firstly, participants sought an immersive language learning environment, with EMI universities offering them the opportunity to deepen their English proficiency and fluency. Secondly, a majority pursued access to quality educational resources and knowledge expansion within their chosen fields. Thirdly, high-quality education and specialized programs were key considerations in choosing an EMI university. Finally, research-oriented participants emphasized the university's scientific reputation and research training opportunities as significant motivators.

Career-Related Reasons

Further analysis of the interview data yielded another cluster of reasons influencing participants' choice of EMI universities, categorized as career-related considerations. The participants identified two main career-related influences that prompted them to choose a particular EMI university: future career perspectives and the opportunity to undertake

internships. More precisely, data analysis revealed that all participants were also driven by career-related considerations, such as employment opportunities associated with the diploma from EMI university and enhanced professional prospects. This idea is exemplified in the following extract:

Extract 6:

I think that after graduating from an EMI university, we will have more opportunities to find good jobs in global companies abroad and build a good career ladder. It is generally believed that people planning to graduate from EMI University are smarter and more promising (Sanat, November 4, 2023).

Additionally, three participants (Erkezhan, Aruzhan, and Sanat) emphasized the importance of the university Career and Advising Center, which assists students with employment and offers different international internships. Participants mentioned that they were not informed about this center before enrolling at that university. They emphasized that the Career and Advising Center helps students to take an internship in globally well-known companies, which allows students to get invaluable experience and good job options after graduation. This point is given in the following extract:

Extract 7:

Also, do you know about the CAC (Career and Advising Center) at this university? I know many senior students, who completed international internships in different countries and companies. After graduation, they mentioned this experience in their CVs and got great jobs. This also caught my attention (Erkezhan, October 27, 2023).

Thus, the above excerpts indicate that one of the main reasons for students to opt

for an EMI university is an opportunity provided by the university to find a prestigious job and get an internship abroad.

Personal Reasons

It emerged from the data analysis that, apart from academic and career-related factors, the students had some personal reasons behind their choice of EMI university. This category of reasons includes the influence of parents and friends, the influence of social media, networking opportunities and university facilities.

Five participants (Arman, Kairat, Aruzhan, Aigerim, Almat) acknowledged that they were mostly encouraged by parents and friends when applying for an EMI university. The participants reported that during high school, their peers began to explore various educational programs and top universities and discussed the process of admission. That was one of the driving factors encouraging participants to think about their future education. Additionally, other participants highly emphasized the great influence of parents on their choice of an EMI university. They stated that their parents played an active role in choosing their universities. These points can be illustrated in the extract given by Kairat:

Extract 8:

Two of my classmates in grade 11 started preparing to apply to study abroad, and they made me think about my future education. I started comparing myself to them as they were my company. So I would say that they motivated me to come here (Kairat, October 25, 2023).

The data analysis revealed that friends and family members greatly influenced the participants' choice of an EMI university by encouraging them to study at one of the best universities and even suggesting them a particular university. Additionally, two other

participants (Ailin and Aigerim) emphasized that they were greatly influenced by social media networks. They acknowledged that they followed the Instagram and TikTok blogs of some students, who were studying at this university and watched their videos about international professors, the studying process, and the facilities provided by the university. Such videos and posts have greatly attracted the participants' attention and motivated them to choose that university. The comment below illustrates the way how the university can be promoted through social media networks and appeal to candidates' attention:

Extract 9:

As a student at the school, I watched with interest the lives of the students who study here through their social networks (Instagram and YouTube). I was very impressed with the lives and benefits of the students studying at EMI University, especially when they posted videos with foreign professors or social events organized by the university. This greatly influenced my choice of this university (Ailin, November 15, 2023).

The data analysis also revealed that two participants (Almat and Arman) chose a particular EMI university to find like-minded friends and improve their networking. The participants acknowledged that by applying for a highly selective EMI university they were expected to be surrounded by intelligent peers:

Extract 10:

I study here to find people with the same mindset as me and establish connections with such students in order to discover or create something unique and useful for the country. Actually, that was the main reason why I chose this university... just to make friends with smart people (Almat, October 31, 2023).

Extract 11:

An EMI university allows us to create an environment in which there are many ... I would not say that knowledge of English is an indicator of intelligence, but still a person who knows English is statistically smarter than the average student. Thus, there is an environment of smart people and enthusiasts (Arman, November 2, 2023).

Another primary reason behind choosing an EMI university is the campus facilities and living conditions provided by the university. In this regard, four participants emphasized the high-quality on-campus housing and a diverse range of campus facilities, including a large library, a sports center, student clubs, and a medical center. Extract 16 highlights how the quality of accommodation and available amenities impact students' choice of university, emphasizing the importance of factors beyond academic offerings:

Extract 12:

As I passed UNT alongside IELTS and SAT, I also applied to state universities. Eventually, two state universities offered me grants, but I chose this university because of the best dormitory in Kazakhstan and a variety of facilities. For example, a super-big library and sports center. I was happy when I saw a swimming pool here (Erkezhan, October 27, 2023).

Thus, this subsection presented three groups of reasons behind students' choice of an EMI university. These groups were named as academic, career-related, and personal reasons. Academic reasons include a favorable language learning environment created by the university, access to high quality education and rich-resources, and an opportunity to improve research skills. Career-related reasons were related to job prospects after

graduation from an EMI university and international internship programs offered by the university. In addition to these reasons, the data analysis also revealed students' personal reasons, such as the influence of close circle of family and friends and social media networks, their desire to be surrounded by well-educated and smart people, and campus facilities provided by the university.

Challenges Faced by First-year Students at an EMI University

Analysis of interview data revealed three main groups of challenges encountered by first-year undergraduate students, who applied for an EMI university without having previous EMI experience. These challenges are classified into (1) academic, (2) language-related, and (3) individual. It is important to note that these challenges are interrelated. These challenges are given in the thematic map (see Figure 2) and explained further in detail.

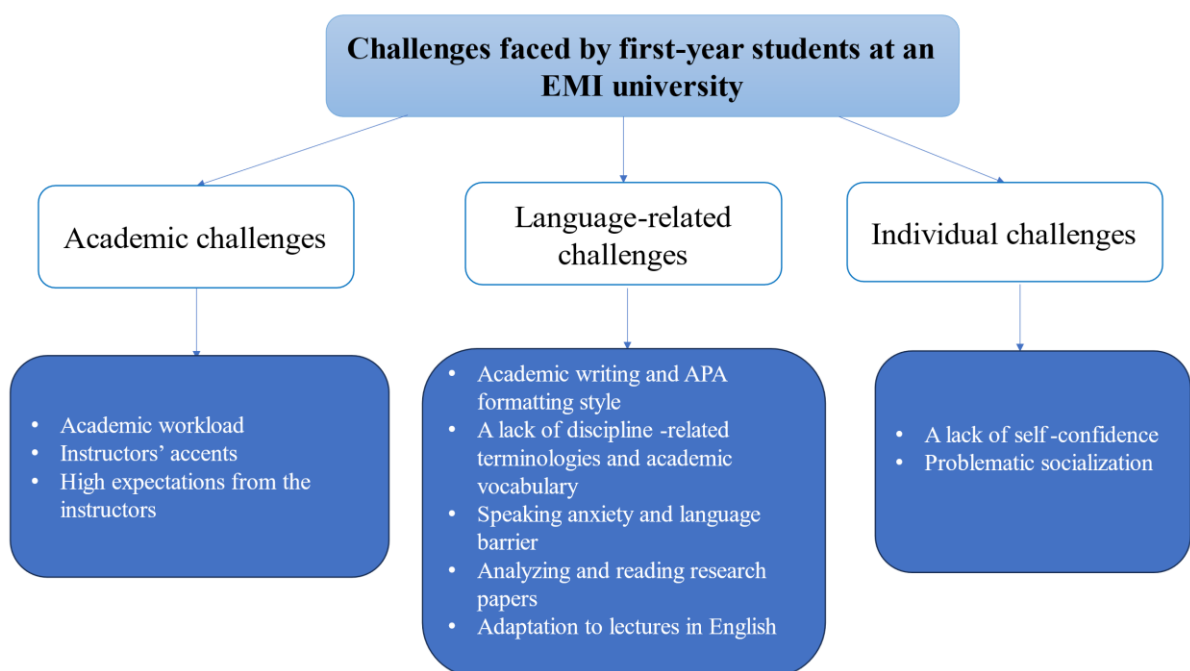


Figure 2. Thematic map derived from the participants' data on their challenges at the EMI

university

Language-related Challenges

Language-related challenges are the most common challenges encountered by first-year students, especially by those who enrolled in an EMI university without having the experience of studying through EMI. The data analysis revealed five main challenges related to academic writing and APA formatting style, discipline-related terminologies, speaking anxiety and language barrier, analyzing and reading research papers, and adaptation to lectures in English.

The analysis of interview data showed that one of the common linguistic challenges faced by participants was related to academic writing. All participants reported that prior to enrolling at the EMI university, they had not learned about the conventions of academic writing. They acknowledged that it is still challenging for them to formulate thesis statements and present arguments following the structure of academic writing. Three (Arman, Kairat, Aigerim) students acknowledge that they have academic writing course but they do not find it useful. More importantly, five participants (Almat, Sanat, Erkezhan, Kairat, and Alma) made some parallels between the structure of academic writing required at an EMI university and their previous experiences in writing academic essays. They postulated that they did not write any academic essays or papers in English at school. Rather, they had an experience of writing a short academic essay only during the preparation for passing academic IELTS. This challenge is fittingly explained by Kairat, Almat, and Aruzhan in the following extracts:

Extract 13:

Academic writing was the main challenge that I faced at this university... It is

challenging for me to follow the structure of academic writing and presenting arguments. It is completely different from the IELTS writing part... I have never written academic papers before, even in Russian, studying at a Russian-medium school (Kairat, October 25, 2023).

In addition to academic writing challenges, three participants (Erkezhan, Aigerim, Kairat) also reported some difficulties in citing and referencing sources according to APA style. They acknowledged that they were not informed about academic integrity and citation styles used in academic papers. Therefore, initially it was quite challenging for them to appropriately cite and create a reference list based on APA. Participants also reported some cases when they were penalized for inappropriate citations and lost points for it. Echoing this point, Erkezhan said:

Extract 14:

APA is very difficult for me. My professor even intimidated me by saying that if these mistakes happen again, he will send me to academic misconduct. It was because of inappropriate citation of sources and high percentage of similarity in Turnitin. I was very scared. These are very simple things that everyone knows. But I don't know them (Erkezhan, October 27, 2023).

Another challenge faced by participants is limited academic vocabulary and difficulty in using discipline-related terminologies. Five participants (Arman, Aigerim, Erkezhan, Kairat, Sanat) acknowledged that their vocabulary inventory was not enough to write comprehensible academic reports and essays as well as to engage in academic conversations. Sanat and Arman reported that they found it challenging to use terminologies appropriately in the context. Additionally, some participants mentioned that

they spent much of their time searching and googling academic words that suited the context. The following extracts elucidate the point:

Extract 15:

My knowledge of terminology in STEM disciplines is limited. Therefore, at first, I was not able to describe the chemical process in the lab report. Even now, I feel that I sometimes use terminologies and academic words inappropriately, so I often use Google Translate (Arman, November 2, 2023).

The data analysis revealed that other major challenges experienced by participants at the EMI university are speaking anxiety and language barrier. Five participants (Sanat, Alma, Erkezhan, Aruzhan, Alina) reported that at first, they avoided talking to foreigners because they were afraid that they would be judged for their speaking skills, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, they compared themselves with NIS students, who completed their schooling in English and were quite confident in their language proficiency. These external influences caused speaking anxiety and created a language barrier for participants. This challenge is well explained in extracts given by Sanat and Aigerim:

Extract 16:

I have a little problem with speaking. It is difficult for me to express my thoughts freely. I still have a big, I would even say, a huge language barrier. I did not have enough speaking practice at school, so I constantly doubt if I said the right thing, if others would understand me, and maybe the professor will misunderstand me (Sanat, November 4, 2023).

It emerged from the data analysis that, alongside academic writing and speaking challenges, participants often experience challenges in reading and comprehending

research papers. Four participants (Ailin, Alina, Aruzhan, Erkezhan, Alma) reported it is quite challenging to comprehend and analyze academic papers as they consist of many terminologies and academic words, which are not understandable in the context.

Additionally, participants emphasized that they were not used to dealing with long academic papers at school. Therefore, reading and analyzing academic papers takes much of their time, as shown in these extracts:

Extract 17:

Initially, I did not understand the meaning of terms in the context. That's why I spent a lot of time on reading articles to understand it, and I used a Yandex translator. Even now, I still face such difficulties while reading course readings (Erkezhan, October 27, 2023).

Extract 18:

At first, it was challenging for me to cover 20-30 pages of information on the subjects of political sciences and sociology. I have never dealt with such a volume of information. Now, I'm getting used to it. Now, I take notes while reading to better understand the main points of the text (Almat, November 10, 2023).

The data analysis revealed that participants also encountered difficulties in listening and comprehending class lectures in English. Three participants (Ailin, Sanat, Alma) reported that at the beginning of the semester, it was quite challenging for them to listen to long academic lectures. They attributed this challenge to a lack of previous experience in listening to lectures in English, as elucidated in the following extract:

Extract 19:

At first, I could listen to only 20 minutes of the 75-minute lectures. I could not

understand the information. I think it is not sometimes about professors' accents, but the language in which the information is given. It was challenging, but it's getting better now after I got used to intensive reading and had exposure to English during the sessions (Ailin, November 15, 2023).

This subsection presented language-related challenges encountered by research participants. It is suggested that the majority of participants mostly have difficulties with academic writing, using academic vocabulary and terms, and engaging in conversation in English. Additionally, some participants reported the difficulties with reading academic texts and listening to academic lectures in English. Overall, the arguments and supporting extracts above clearly showed participants' concerns about their linguistic abilities.

Academic Challenges

It was found that the language-related difficulties caused academic challenges for students. The data analysis revealed five academic challenges encountered by the participants. These challenges were high academic workload, instructors' accents, and high expectations of students' knowledge.

Interview analysis yielded that almost all participants faced difficulties in managing a huge academic workload. They attributed their difficulties to a lack of academic preparedness arising from their prior educational background. According to participants, the preparedness provided by their schools was not enough to succeed at an EMI university, especially in STEM disciplines as they did not cover STEM topics in English. Due to the knowledge gap, participants had to put in more effort to reach the academic level of their peers educated in highly selective EMI schools, such as NIS and BIL. This finding suggests that students who had graduated from the mainstream had a double

academic workload because they needed to catch up to their peers by addressing their knowledge gaps and also work on analyzing new materials and information. The following extracts elucidate this point:

Extract 20:

There are many NIS and BIL students here, who studied STEM subjects in English at school. As I studied all STEM subjects in Russian, now, I need to devote more time to preparation than the average student of a NIS or BIL. I need to catch up with the material that many of these students already know (Arman, November 2, 2023)

Another academic challenge widely encountered by participants was getting adjusted to different accents. To elaborate, five participants (Alina, Aruzhan, Sanat, Aigerim, Almat) reported experiencing significant difficulties comprehending some of their instructors' speech during the initial months at this EMI university. They attributed this phenomenon to the fact that for the majority of instructors English was not their first language. This point is clearly articulated in the following extracts gleaned from Alina and Aruzhan.

Extract 21:

At first, it was very difficult for me to listen to and understand some professors' accents. For example, we have a professor from Pakistan. During the first month of our studies, I understood almost nothing. His accent was largely incomprehensible. Now I have mostly adjusted to his accent, but it still requires deep concentration during the sessions (Alina, November 3, 2023).

The data analysis also showed that most instructors working at an EMI university

have high expectations towards first-year students studying at that university, and this issue was a challenge to some participants. Four participants (Sanat, Arman, Kairat, Alma) reported that some professors skipped specific information during their lectures, assuming that most students would already know it. However, it was only those from NIS and BIL who had learned it. Additionally, some participants noted that their professors assumed they were familiar with APA formatting style and academic writing. Extracts 21 and 22 exemplify this point.

Extract 22:

Once one of the professors said that most students here came from NIS and they already learnt the ideas discussed in today's session. He said that he would not explain particular ideas in detail. But I needed these details because I didn't study them before joining the university (Sanat, November 4, 2023).

Individual Challenges

The data analysis revealed that beyond academic and linguistic challenges, students within the EMI university described struggles with self-confidence and social interaction, highlighting the personal challenges they encountered. Seven participants reported that, due to their different backgrounds, they compare themselves to students from highly selective EMI schools, such as NIS and BIL. They acknowledged that at first, it was difficult, as they lacked self-confidence and low self-esteem in the environment of "smart people." Additionally, in terms of socialization in the educational environments, they experienced loneliness and a lack of support especially in the case of Alma. Sanat, Alina, and Alma mentioned that NIS and BIL students came here in groups, and they always hang out together, whereas students from mainstream schools do not often have friends and

spend their free time alone. Participants attributed this phenomenon to the strong academic preparation afforded by highly selective schools. Students attending highly selective schools typically benefit from access to superior resources and a higher overall quality of education. Consequently, they are often better positioned to gain admission to EMI universities. The following extracts explain these points clearly:

Extract 23:

It was very difficult at first. Everyone seemed super smarter than me. I thought I was weaker than the other students. I often compared myself to NIS and BIL students as their English was better than mine. So, I had a low self-confidence (Aigerim, November 3, 2023).

Extract 24:

I experienced this transition emotionally in terms of socialization because students from NIS come here in groups. Regarding students from mainstream schools, there are only few of them. At first, I felt so lonely. If you have a friend, you feel support. I needed friends at that time (Alina, November 3, 2023).

Analysis of interview data revealed that mainstream school students transitioning to specialized EMI programs frequently express concerns regarding their academic and linguistic preparedness compared to their peers from NIS and BIL schools. This, in turn, causes problems with self-confidence and hinders their social integration within the EMI environment.

Dealing with the Challenges: Participants' English learning Strategy Use

This section presents the LLSs employed by participants to address the challenges

that they face studying at an EMI university. As outlined in Chapter 2, the participants' reported use of LLSs was analyzed according to Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of LLSs. According to Oxford (1990), LLSs are divided into two groups: direct and indirect. Direct strategies are characterized by their focus on mental processing and encompass memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. As for indirect strategies, they involve less direct interaction with the language itself and are categorized as metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (for more information on Oxford's (1990) LLS classification, see Chapter 2). Table 2 presents the LLSs used by participants to deal with their academic, linguistic and personal challenges at the EMI university. The table was followed by a qualitative analysis of participants' interview data, offering a contextualized description of their LLS use.

Table 3

The participants' use of LLSs

Classification of strategies	Types of strategies	Strategies used by the participants	Participants
Direct strategies	Memory	Imagining different situations to use terms in the context	Sanat, Aigerim
		Reviewing terminologies and academic words	Aruzhan, Alma, Erkezhan, Aigerim
	Cognitive	Practicing writing academic essays, and lab reports	Kairat, Arman, Ailin, Almat, Aruzhan, Sanat, Aigerim

	Engaging in conversations with international students	Sanat, Aigerim
	Looking through professors' presentations and taking notes	Ailin, Aruzhan, Alma
	Listening to podcasts and watching movies in English	Ailin, Alma, Erkezhan
	Using AI and translators (ChatGPT and Grammarly) in writing assignments	Kairat, Arman, Ailin, Almat, Alina, Aruzhan, Alma, Erkezhan, Sanat, Aigerim.
	Rereading academic papers	Arman, Almat, Alma, Erkezhan
	Structuring questions in mind before asking	Ailin, Almat,
	Analyzing other students' papers	Alma, Erkezhan
Compensation	Avoiding long conversations with professors	Alma, Arman

		Explaining terminologies using simple words	Ailin, Almat, Aigerim
Indirect strategies	Metacognitive	Planning of written assignments and preparation for mid-term and final exams	Arman, Ailin, Aruzhan, Alma, Sanat
		Paraphrasing	Aruzhan, Kairat, Ailin, Aruzhan
		Eliminating distractions	Kairat, Erkezhan, Almat
		Analyzing professors' feedback	Alina, Arman, Aigerim
		Keeping time-management	Kairat, Alma, Erkezhan,
	Affective	School-life balance	Kairat, Aruzhan, Alma
		Hobby (playing the guitar, attending dance clubs)	Sanat, Almat

	Self-rewarding	Alma, Arman, Aruzhan
	Self-talking	Sanat, Aigerim
Social	Attending webinars organized by a writing center at NU	Arman, Alma
	Asking for help from friends	Ailin, Alma
	Having conversation with professors' and teachers' assistants	Alma, Aigerim,
	Attending speaking clubs	Alina, Sanat,

Direct Strategies

The data analysis revealed the participants' engagement with all three direct LLS types: memory, cognitive, and compensation, in dealing with challenges faced at an EMI university. The participants' strategy use will be further explained in this section.

Memory Strategies. These types of LLSs help learners store information by making mental linkages, using sounds and images, and reviewing (Oxford, 1990). The analysis of interview data revealed that five participants reported utilizing memory strategies. Two participants (Sanat and Aigerim) reported that to memorize terms and academic words and use them correctly in the context, they often created various situations

in their imagination to make a linkage between words and contexts in which they were well suited. Additionally, four participants (Aruzhan, Alma, Erkezhan, Aigerim) mentioned that they often reviewed new terminologies and academic words to keep them in their long-term memory. Their experience of using memory LLSs is given in the following extracts:

Extract 25:

When I visit the professor's office hours, I cannot explain my problem properly because I feel doubt about using terms and academic words. So, to deal with this issue, I always imagine different situations in my mind about how I will explain something using particular terms. (Sanat, November 4, 2023)

Cognitive Strategies. These types of strategies include cognitive activities, such as practicing, analyzing, reasoning, note-taking, summarizing, and outlining (Oxford, 1990). Analysis of the data indicated that participants predominantly employed cognitive LLSs. Seven participants facing challenges with academic writing reported addressing them through consistent practice, while two others, tackling the same issues, opted for a method of analyzing others' papers to improve their writing skills. Additionally, to improve the quality of written assignments and lab reports, all participants highly relied on Artificial Intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT and Grammarly. When managing a heavy information flow and high academic workload, three participants (Ailin, Aruzhan, and Alma) highlighted the effectiveness of taking notes during lectures and reviewing professors' presentations afterward. Additionally, participants emphasized the value of rereading course materials multiple times for a deeper understanding of specific topics. Regarding overcoming speaking challenges, some participants pointed out the importance of audio

and visual input, such as listening to podcasts and watching English movies, and engaging in speaking practice with international students, as methods to enhance their oral skills. Also, Ailin and Almat emphasized the habit of pre-formulating questions as a valuable strategy for avoiding speaking mistakes. The given extract explains participants' use of cognitive LLSs.

Extract 26:

I use artificial intelligence, especially Chat GPT in writing assignments. I take ideas and examples from there. And also, when I write very simple sentences, I use AI to paraphrase them into more academic sentences... When we are given written assignments that I have not written before I sometimes ask Chat GPT to give me examples (Aruzhan, November 12, 2023).

Compensation Strategies. These strategies enable learners to overcome their limitations in writing and speaking by inferring meaning from context and utilizing synonyms (Oxford, 1990). The analysis of this study revealed that five participants (Arman, Ailin, Almat, Aigerim, Alma) employed these types of strategies to address their speaking difficulties. Dealing with insufficient speaking skills, two participants (Sanat and Almat) admitted to avoiding lengthy conversations with professors, while three others reported using synonyms to explain terminology or academic words:

Extract 27:

I don't have a lot of problems with speaking, but I often explain some terms in simple words. I remember words better when I can explain them in simple language. Regarding remembering the words, I try to learn academic vocabulary by using simpler synonyms (Almat, October 31, 2023).

Indirect Strategies

Analysis of the data revealed that participants utilized not only direct learning strategies, but also all three types of indirect strategies: metacognitive, affective, and social, which indirectly affect the process of learning. The participants' use of indirect strategies will be explained in this section.

Metacognitive strategies. These types of LLSs enable language learners to effectively plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning process and achievements (Oxford, 1990). The data analysis revealed that participants employed five types of metacognitive strategies, such as pre-planning of written assignments (5 participants), paraphrasing ideas taken from the internet (4 participants), analyzing professors' feedback (3 participants), eliminating distractions (3 participants), and using effective time management strategies (3 participants). Participants reported employing multiple metacognitive strategies concurrently to effectively plan, analyze, and evaluate their studying process and course achievements. The participants' experience of using metacognitive strategies is explain in the extract given by Alma:

Extract 28:

I try not to postpone assignments until the last moment of submission. I always try to complete them immediately after receiving them. I also usually prepare in advance for quizzes and midterm exams... It is impossible to cope with such a workload without time management (Alma, November 10, 2023).

Affective Strategies. Affective strategies help learners to manage their emotions and anxiety, which positively influence the learning process (Oxford, 1990). It emerged from the data analysis that participants use a number of affective strategies, including

keeping school-life balance, engaging in different hobbies, self-rewarding, and self-talking. In this regard, three participants (Kairat, Aruzhan, and Alma) noted the significant challenge of maintaining a healthy school-life balance, emphasizing that neglecting this balance leads to burnout. Two other participants (Sanat and Almat) emphasized the importance of hobbies, especially playing the guitar and dancing, as methods to relieve stress. However, four other participants (Alma, Arman, Aruzhan, and Aigerim) employ self-rewarding and self-talk as motivation strategies to tackle challenges. Extracts 44 and 45 exemplify this idea.

Extract 29:

I am very strict about the balance between study and leisure. For example, I work very hard until Friday and take full rest on weekends. I also reward myself for small achievements by meeting friends or going out to eat. I give myself the right to take a little rest (Aruzhan, November 12, 2023).

Social Strategies. These types of strategies enable learners to improve their language proficiency by cooperating with other people (Oxford, 1990). The data analysis revealed that two participants (Arman and Alma) sought support from the university's writing center, attending webinars and practicing writing skills to address their academic writing challenges. For example, Arman mentioned that he regularly attended the writing, which he found "useful for improving his academic writing skills" (Arman, November 2, 2023). Most participants, however, employed social strategies to improve their communication skills. They frequently engaged in conversations with international professors and peers in English. Notably, two participants (Alina and Sanat) even mentioned organizing and attending speaking clubs. For instance, Alina mentioned that to

improve her speaking skills she “started to attend a debate club at the university” (Alina, November 3, 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the main findings related to the first-year students' experiences in studying at the EMI university. Firstly, it presented biographical vignettes of ten participants. Next, the findings were organized according to three themes that revealed as a result of data analysis, including students' reasons behind choosing an EMI university, their challenges faced in the EMI university environment, and their strategies to address these challenges. In the subsequent chapter, a comprehensive discussion will delve deeper into the presented findings, exploring their relation to the theoretical framework and the previous studies written on this topic.

Discussion

The research findings were presented in the previous chapter based on data gleaned from narrative essays and semi-structured individual interviews with ten first-year students studying at one highly selective EMI university in Kazakhstan. This chapter illustrates the discussion of the research findings in relation to the theoretical frameworks and relevant previous studies.

The present chapter is divided into four sections. It starts by revisiting the theoretical frameworks that guide the current study followed by discussing the findings of the present study with reference to the research questions and relevant studies.

Revising the Theoretical Framework Adopted in the Present Study

As described in Chapter 2, the present study adopted Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy and Oxford's (1990) classification of LLSs. Spolsky's framework emphasizes the interconnectedness of three key components - language beliefs (LB), language practice (LP), and language management (LM) - as crucial for the effective implementation of new language policies. Aligned with the purpose of exploring first-year students' experiences at an EMI university, this framework was adopted to examine (1) the impact of students' perceptions of the EMI language policy on their choice of the university; and (2) the language practice challenges faced by students in the EMI environment.

Notably, this research goes beyond identifying student challenges in EMI settings by exploring the diverse language learning strategies (LLSs) students employ to navigate these difficulties. To achieve this, the study adopted Oxford's (1990) classification of LLSs, examining the types of LLSs used by first-year students. This framework

emphasizes “a whole person” approach, recognizing that learners draw on various resources to acquire language.

The subsequent sections will delve into the theoretical underpinnings of language policy and the classification of LLS employed within this study. This will be followed by a discussion of the research questions guiding the investigation and a review of relevant literature exploring students' experiences at EMI universities.

RQ1: Participants' Motivations to Study at an EMI University

Building on Spolsky's (2004) theory of language policy, which underscores the influence of learners' language perceptions and ideologies on language acquisition and use, this study examined the participants' motives for pursuing their studies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan. The data analysis showed that participants' choices stemmed from academic, career-related, and personal reasons. Positive perceptions towards the benefits of English influenced their decisions, aligning with Spolsky (2004). These reasons are discussed further in the following subsections.

Academic Reasons. Following the integration of the Bologna three-cycle system in Kazakhstan's higher education in 2010, EMI programs have witnessed significant growth, leading to an increased emphasis on English in education (Karabassova, 2020). In this regard, the implementation of EMI in Kazakhstan's higher education has been commonly perceived as an opportunity to master academic and professional English to establish an internationally competitive nation (Seitzhanova et al., 2015). This, in turn, was also the main reason behind students' choice of an EMI university. Prior to enrolling in an EMI university, the research participants perceived studying at this university as a unique

language learning environment conducive to their English proficiency development.

Interestingly, upon enrollment, they reported not only the fulfillment of their linguistic expectations but also the tangible improvement of their language skills. This finding aligns with that of Bezborodova and Radjabzade (2021), who studied Central Asian students from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and identified the EMI environment as a valuable source for language improvement and practice. Similarly, Tajik et al. (2023), in their qualitative study, found that one of the primary reasons behind Kazakhstani students' choice of EMI universities was their strong desire to enhance their language skills.

However, although this positive perception was observed in many Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan, there are several studies arguing that EMI universities do not guarantee improved language proficiency. For example, Yessenbekova (2023) found that many students studying in Kazakhstani EMI programs expressed concerns about their language development. Students indicated that insufficient language proficiency among both instructors and their peers led to the use of translanguaging but in an ineffective way. Drawing upon Spolsky's (2004) language policy theory, Yessenbekova (2023) referred to a misalignment between the university's official language management and the students' actual practice of English. This suggests that there are potential differences in resources and conditions provided by EMI universities in Kazakhstan.

The present study also found that EMI programs are regarded as a valuable pathway to accessing global research. The data analysis of this study also reported participants' high interest in getting access to more reliable scientific resources as one of the primary reasons behind their choice of EMI. This finding was clearly articulated by Aigerim, who argued that there is a scarcity of information about space research in Kazakh and Russian, whereas a substantial body of research exists in English. This finding was

reported in a number of empirical studies (Baltabayev, 2020; Karabay, 2017; Myrzakulova, 2019) conducted in the Kazakhstani context, which suggested that students opted for EMI settings due to the important role of English as a global language of science. Therefore, it is commonly known that one of the advantages of EMI education is access to research databases and reliable resources related to any discipline.

Another well-known academic reason reported by research participants was the high quality of education and specialized programs provided by EMI universities. In fact, EMI was integrated into Kazakhstan's education system in order to offer world standards of quality education, providing graduates with globally recognized diplomas (Kerimkulova et al., 2023). This finding was also replicated in Karabay's (2017) study, suggesting that EMI programs were perceived as more "advanced" than Kazakh- or Russian-medium programs in Kazakhstan. More importantly, studies conducted by Karabay (2017) and Tajik et al. (2023) revealed that students perceived graduating from EMI programs as a strong indicator of increased opportunities for further education abroad. Thus, these studies suggest that Kazakhstani students largely hold the belief that studying at an EMI university facilitates access to both higher-quality education and broader.

Career-Related Reasons. The main goals of the EMI implementation within the Bologna Process were to improve students' mobility and provide them with an opportunity to join the global labor market (Ball & Lindsay, 2013). Following these goals, the government of Kazakhstan declared the strategic development program "Kazakhstan-2050," which involves the emphasis on EMI programs as a key tool to cultivate highly skilled professionals who can seamlessly compete in the international arena (Kerimkulova et al., 2023). This study's findings align with the notion that career-oriented advantages

motivate students to choose EMI universities, as evidenced by participants citing this as a key factor in their decision. Several participants of the present study reported that upon completion of their EMI programs, they hope to obtain prestigious job positions. This finding aligns with prior research conducted by Bezborodova and Radjabzade (2021) in the Central Asian context, who found that students largely viewed EMI programs as offering enhanced employment opportunities and enabling the creation of prosperous lives. The same results emerged from the previous studies conducted in the Kazakhstani context. For example, Baltabayev (2020) and Yessenbekova (2023) found that Kazakhstani university students chose EMI programs because of their desire for better career prospects and get more economic benefits. Supporting the previous point, Tajik et al. (2023) argued that EMI programs in Kazakhstan were perceived, especially by students from low socio-economic backgrounds, as an opportunity to ascend the social ladder and enhance their social status.

Thus, the findings reported here suggest that the positive perception of socio-economic benefits, such as better job prospects and enhanced social status, was a crucial factor influencing Kazakhstani students' choice of EMI programs.

Personal Reasons. Beyond academic and career motivations, the data analysis revealed several personal reasons influencing students' choice of EMI universities. These included the influence of family and friends, the impact of social media networks, the desire to be surrounded by high-achieving peers, and access to university facilities. Among all these personal factors influencing their decisions, participants identified the significant influence of family members and friends as the most impactful on their university choice. In this regard, Lueg and Lueg (2015), who studied the context of Denmark, claimed that parental and peer influence on students' choice of EMI is closely related to their social

background and cultural capital. Their study revealed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds chose EMI universities not only for improved employment prospects but also as a response to pressure from parents and peers. However, the current study showed that most participants' parents represent what Hajar (2019) calls "trust network" by providing indirect support for their children's language education through emotional encouragement and financial resources. However, two participants (Arman and Sanat) reported direct parental involvement in their English language learning, which also positively impacted their choice of an EMI program. Furthermore, this study highlighted an indirect form of parental involvement in their children's language development through the provision of supplementary paid lessons. These findings were also reported by Batyrkhanova (2020), who explored the mediating role of parents and friends as social agents in the English learning experiences of Kazakhstani students. The study found that family members were able to change students' attitudes towards English and demonstrate to them the importance of English in their future lives. Additionally, Batyrkhanova (2020) emphasized the role of peers, who created a competitive environment for students and motivated them to improve their English skills. This suggests that among all these personal reasons found in this study, the influence of parents and peers played a significant role in students' choice of an EMI university.

This subsection focused on exploring the various reasons underlying students' choice of EMI. These reasons were categorized into academic, career-related, and personal reasons. The discussion of the study findings in relation to existing studies revealed a predominance of academic and career-related factors as primary drivers for participants' decisions to pursue EMI.

RQ2: Participants' Academic and Linguistic Challenges at an EMI University

The increasing number of EMI programs worldwide has prompted a shift in research focus towards students' experiences transitioning from secondary school to EMI higher education (Aizawa & Rose, 2020). Based on these few studies, students reported a variety of significant challenges, particularly linguistic and academic ones, when transitioning to EMI educational settings (see Aizawa, 2023). Thus, recognizing the limited research on the transition from secondary schools to EMI universities in Kazakhstan, this study investigated the Kazakhstani students' challenges in this transition and revealed three categories of challenges faced by first-year EMI students: language-related, academic, and individual. Notably, while these categories are distinct, they are interrelated. These challenges will be further discussed in the following subsections.

Linguistic Challenges. Building upon established research demonstrating the important role of language proficiency in student success at EMI universities (Curle, 2023), recent studies have focused more on students' language-related challenges in these educational settings (Aizawa & Rose, 2020). The present study explored first-year undergraduate students' challenges, who experienced the transition from Kazakh- and Russian medium secondary schools to an EMI university. It was identified that this group of students encountered linguistic challenges related mainly to academic writing, using and learning discipline-related vocabulary, speaking anxiety, and comprehension of academic articles.

Interestingly, all participants identified their limited vocabulary as a frequently encountered challenge within the EMI university. It is widely acknowledged that students' vocabulary size greatly predicts their linguistic challenges (Lin & Morrison, 2010) and

significantly influences their academic achievement in EMI universities (Harrington & Roche, 2014). The present study found that participants' limited vocabulary inventory posed challenges for them in writing academic papers, engaging in academic conversations, and comprehending academic texts. Similarly, studies conducted in China (Lin & Morrison, 2010), Italy (Macaro et al., 2019), Japan (Aizawa & Rosa, 2020), Sri Lanka (Mahawatta & Rassool, 2023), revealed that students' lack of discipline-related vocabulary complicated the process of studying in an EMI university and posed significant language-related challenges. This finding was previously reported in the Kazakhstani context by Sadykova (2023), who found that the insufficient knowledge of academic and general vocabulary negatively impacted many students' development across the four language skills. Considering the focus of these studies on students transitioning from L1 medium schools to EMI universities, it can be concluded that students from non-EMI secondary schools often lack sufficient vocabulary, which potentially leads to various linguistic challenges in EMI settings.

Interestingly, among all language-related challenges, participants emphasized difficulties in academic writing and speaking. Studies investigating the student transition from non-English medium instruction schools to EMI universities consistently report difficulties in productive skills as a common challenge among this group of students (Aizawa & Rose, 2020; Kamasak et al., 2021). More specifically, participants highlighted significant challenges in adhering to the structure of academic writing, effectively presenting arguments, supporting them with relevant examples, and formatting them according to APA style. They attributed these difficulties to their limited experience and inadequate prior knowledge of academic writing before entering the EMI university. These findings were also reported by previous studies conducted in Kazakhstan (Karabay, 2017;

Sadykova, 2022). Karabay (2017) emphasized the prevalence of academic writing challenges, especially with the structuring of academic essays, among EMI students regardless of major or year of study. Sadykova (2022) further supports these findings through a statistical analysis of student challenges across four language skills, identifying writing as the most formidable area for Kazakhstani students. Her study highlights specific difficulties with academic writing structure, paraphrasing, and summarizing information. Sadykova (2022) attributes these challenges to a lack of instruction in academic writing systems and approaches. These findings align with the results of Aizawa and Rose's (2020) study, which indicated that Japanese students' challenges with structuring and planning academic essays stemmed not from students' insufficient language proficiency but from a lack of understanding of the academic writing system and approaches. Thus, these studies collectively underscore the critical need for students to develop strong academic writing skills before entering an EMI university environment. It should be noted that although prior studies have identified student challenges in academic writing structure, vocabulary usage, and English grammar, they notably lack discussion of the difficulties students face with APA formatting style.

Another illuminating finding revealed from this study was students' speaking anxiety and language barrier experienced within the EMI educational setting. Attributing their speaking challenges to the disparity in practice opportunities compared to students from EMI schools, several participants indicated low self-confidence and fear of making mistakes in front of their highly proficient peers from EMI schools as the primary reasons behind their anxiety and perceived language barrier. Previously, Sadykova (2023) also pinpointed this common issue, highlighting that students from L1 medium schools are more likely to be concerned about their speaking fluency and accuracy, which in turn

contributes to increased speaking anxiety. Aizawa and Rose (2020) attribute students' speaking challenges to their prior English language learning experiences, particularly the use of native language (L1) in teaching English. They argue that this approach restricts students' opportunities for immersion and sustained practice in spoken English.

Surprisingly, the current study also revealed the discrepancy between students' perceptions of EMI universities and their actual experience of limited spoken English practice. Participants expressed a perceived lack of opportunities to practice spoken English within the university, citing the prevalence of lecture-based instruction and emphasis on written assignments and laboratory experiments. In this regard, Karabay (2017), who examined the experiences of both first-year and senior students in an EMI university, revealed a significant decline in the speaking skills of senior students after five years of studying in an EMI environment, which was evidenced by their IELTS scores. These findings suggest that students, who enroll in EMI universities expecting ample speaking opportunities, may ultimately graduate without fully developed speaking skills.

Academic Challenges. While previous research primarily focused on language-related challenges faced by students transitioning to EMI universities, the present study additionally identified academic challenges stemming from these linguistic difficulties. The research participants reported three main academic challenges: heavy academic workload, EMI instructors' high expectations towards first-year students, and different accents encountered within the EMI setting.

One of the academic challenges, identified by all participants, was a heavy academic workload. They attributed this to their limited exposure to EMI instruction in their prior education, compared to their peers from highly selective EMI schools.

Participants reported spending significantly more time and effort simultaneously reviewing previous knowledge in English and learning new concepts. This study is consistent with that of Besser and Chik (2014) who suggests that unequal distribution of educational resources within the same secondary education context can cause different perceptions of workload among EMI university students. They found that graduates from regular schools, who had limited access to English resources and primarily relied on parental support, tended to focus on practical applications of the language, such as achieving high test scores or grades. This, in turn, caused students' lack of confidence in their preparedness to pursue education in an EMI setting. Conversely, students from highly selective EMI schools, who had early exposure to English and English-speaking cultures alongside their first language, developed a more cosmopolitan outlook, which facilitated their smooth transition to EMI settings. This suggests that students attending schools with L1 medium of instruction often prioritize the practical use of English, potentially leaving them unprepared for the demands of EMI education. This discrepancy can lead to significant linguistic challenges and a heavier workload for these students. For example, Arnbjörnsdóttir (2017), who explored Icelandic students' challenges in studying through EMI, found that students experienced a high academic workload because they were not prepared to work with academic papers written in English. Similarly, Yessenbekova's (2021) study, investigating EMI in the Kazakhstani context, aligns with these findings, reporting a high workload among students due to the significant time and effort invested in preparing for EMI sessions. This preparation encompassed not only acquiring knowledge but also mastering linguistic aspects, such as revising new vocabulary.

Another important finding revealed in this study was EMI instructors' high expectation towards first-year undergraduate students, who came from non-English

medium schools. The research participants reported that university instructors often skipped some information assuming that students would have learned that in high school. Specifically, instructors assumed familiarity with basic knowledge of STEM disciplines, core terminology within those fields, and APA formatting style. On the contrary, Baltabayev (2018), investigating the Kazakhstani context from both student and instructor perspectives, identified low language proficiency as a key factor hindering students' ability to meet instructors' expectations. Instructors reported readily distinguishing students from mainstream schools due to their linguistic struggles, which often manifested as difficulties grasping course content (Baltabayev, 2018). This challenge was also reported in the context of Iceland (Al-Bakri, 2017) and Italy (Macaro et al., 2019), confirming that this challenge stems not from a lack of prior knowledge but from students' underdeveloped academic vocabulary and language skills. As highlighted by Al-Bakri (2017) and Macaro et al. (2019), students, particularly first-year students, often enter EMI programs linguistically unprepared, leading them to fall short of instructors' expectations. This discussion raises concerns about the effectiveness of content delivery in Kazakhstani secondary education, as first-year students struggled not only with the linguistic demands of EMI but also lacked sufficient content knowledge in STEM disciplines.

Individual Challenges. Besides linguistic and academic challenges, the present study also reported students' individual challenges, especially related to their self-confidence and socialization in the EMI university.

The majority of research participants attributed their challenging transition to the EMI university not to diverse academic and linguistic difficulties, but rather to issues of socialization within the university environment. Specifically, they cited the presence of

students from highly selective schools enrolling as a group as a significant factor (see Extracts 33-34). This was also reported in Almukhambetova's (2017) study, which demonstrated that students from the NIS experienced a smoother social transition in EMI settings due to their tendency to form friendships with other NIS students, who shared similar backgrounds and perspectives. Furthermore, the study found that NIS students provided mutual emotional support and formed a distinct "NIS network" or "NIS community" (Almukhambetova, 2017, p. 118). This sense of belonging and support system reportedly facilitated their academic adaptation to the EMI environment and helped them navigate challenges. Conversely, this study suggests that the lack of similar support systems and unsuccessful social transitions contribute to decreased confidence, increased anxiety, and feelings of loneliness among mainstream school students in EMI settings.

Considering the aim of this study, the data analysis revealed the main challenges experienced by first-year students, who graduated from Kazakh- and Russian-medium schools and directly entered an EMI university. Building upon the previous discussion, students' various challenges can be attributed, in large part, to their insufficient linguistic preparation received at the secondary school level. This can be described by the unequal distribution of resources within the same secondary school context (Besser & Chik, 2014), as in the case of Kazakhstan. Following the launch of the "Trinity of Languages" national project in 2008, the Kazakhstani schools, such as NIS, BIL, and Daryn schools were designated as pilot institutions for implementing EMI in secondary education. This designation led to increased financial support for these schools, allowing them to recruit international experts, hire highly qualified teachers, and adopt EMI-oriented curriculum. In contrast, other mainstream Kazakhstani schools operating within the same policy framework received only short-term professional development courses for teachers,

highlighting the significant disparity in resources allocated to secondary schools (Karabassova, 2020). Consequently, graduates from non-EMI schools found themselves disadvantaged in terms of their linguistic preparedness compared to their counterparts from the highly selective EMI schools. This disparity in language proficiency further compounded the challenges of adapting to and succeeding in an EMI university environment.

Notably, the analysis of participants' narrative writings revealed the perceived relevance of shadow education among non-EMI school students seeking admission to EMI universities. Nine out of ten participants perceived private tutoring as the primary resource for gaining access to highly selective EMI universities. This emphasis on shadow education stems from the widespread requirement for entrance exams and language proficiency tests at EMI universities globally (Prakhov & Sergienko, 2020). Consequently, the study found that participants actively sought private lessons not only to enhance their English language skills but also to prepare for exams, such as IELTS and SAT, aiming to compete effectively with students from EMI schools for admission. Hajar and Karakus (2023), focusing primarily on first-year students' perceptions of private tutoring in Kazakhstan, found that the primary reason behind students' receiving fee-based supplementary lessons was to pass university entrance exams. The study also highlighted that although shadow education offers students access to EMI universities, it also exacerbates inequity due to its limited affordability. In the present study, nine participants reported receiving private lessons to enroll in an EMI university, whereas one participant (Erkezhan) entered that university without getting any help and relying only on her efforts. This finding clearly indicates a challenge of Kazakhstan's secondary education system to provide equal access to EMI universities.

Reflection on the Findings with Reference to Spolsky's (2004) Theoretical Framework

Bernard Spolsky's (2004) theoretical framework on language policy argues that successful implementation requires paying sufficient attention to language management. It dictates the roles assigned to various languages, shapes people's language beliefs through policy initiatives, and creates opportunities for practicing and developing proficiency in specific languages to fulfill the demands of the new policy (Spolsky, 2004). This study demonstrates that mainstream school students generally hold a positive perception of the English language, primarily viewing it as a crucial factor for success in both local and global job markets.

However, a key challenge arises from the misalignment between language management and language practice, particularly in the context of Kazakhstani secondary schools. This challenge is further amplified by the expectation of English proficiency in EMI universities, which presumes students are already prepared to study entirely in English. This stems from the different support provided by the government for mainstream and highly selective schools such as NIS and BIL. Karabassova (2020), for instance, explored this disparity by comparing the conditions in NIS and mainstream schools in terms of preparing students for further EMI education. The study highlighted that, while the government provided mainstream school teachers with only brief training courses, they were nevertheless held accountable for the successful implementation of EMI in these schools. This was also reported by Manan et al. (2023), who argued that in developing countries, such as Kazakhstan, new policies are implemented in a top-down manner, which obligates teachers to be responsible for the successful implementation of policies. This phenomenon was investigated by Hamid and Nguyes (2016) in Bangladesh and termed as

“policy dumping”. They explained that while “traditional policy actors take credit for policy initiation, but the onus of implementation is left with those at the lower strata of the policy hierarchy” (p. 35). This suggests that the current implementation approach for EMI in Kazakhstani mainstream schools contributes to the low quality of teaching, ultimately hindering students’ preparation for further EMI education.

A number of studies worldwide, including Kazakhstan have identified both students’ and EMI instructors’ insufficient language proficiencies as a pressing concern. To address this issue and increase local students’ enrollment in EMI and multilingual educational settings, the government of Kazakhstan employed two primary strategies: scholarship incentives and heightened admission standards (Kerimkulova, 2023). However, it is crucial to acknowledge there are potential limitations associated with these approaches. Achieving admission standards will likely necessitate continued reliance on private tutoring, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities by leaving disadvantaged students behind and widening the gap in access to EMI universities. This study’s findings suggest two potential solutions to address unequal access to EMI universities. Firstly, standardizing conditions across secondary schools, including integrating disciplines like academic writing and speaking into the curriculum, could mitigate disparities in preparation for EMI universities. This approach would ensure all students have a consistent foundation in the critical skills required for success in EMI environments. Secondly, the study highlights the potential of utilizing existing resources, such as the university’s writing center mentioned by four participants. By enhancing awareness and promoting active utilization of this support system, the university can directly assist students in overcoming challenges and meeting academic writing standards. Therefore, implementing these two strategies could not only enhance the quality of teaching in mainstream schools

but also address the challenges faced by students in EMI universities.

RQ3: Strategies Participants Used to Cope with Their Challenges

LLSs are defined as tools employed by language learners to mitigate the process of language acquisition and acquire language skills (Oxford, 1990). The present study revealed that while participants expressed interest in utilizing various LLSs in combination, cognitive and metacognitive strategies emerged as the most prevalent types employed by the research participants. More specifically, participants employed cognitive strategies to address their challenges in academic writing and speaking. As mentioned previously, cognitive LLSs involve analyzing, reasoning, summarizing, and practicing language patterns to enhance understanding (Oxford, 1990).

Seven research participants consistently reported that the most effective strategy for improving their writing skills was frequent practice through writing academic essays and lab reports. Interestingly, all participants also reported using artificial intelligence tools like Chat GPT and Grammarly to enhance their writing by improving sentence structure, replacing basic words with more academic vocabulary, finding relevant examples, and generating ideas. Participants, acknowledging the challenges of speaking, particularly for students with limited practice in mainstream schools, emphasized the importance of consistent practice. Despite experiencing significant speaking anxiety due to peer pressure and lack of prior practice, participants found engaging in conversations with international students beneficial for practicing both every day and academic English. The study further highlighted the significant role of audio-visual resources in supplementing speaking practice and overcoming language barriers. Soruç and Griffiths (2018) further support the prevalence of cognitive strategies among EMI students, identifying over 36 distinct

strategies employed by students at a Turkish EMI university. Their study also aligns with the present findings, highlighting the significance of language practice in dealing with speaking challenges. Additionally, both studies emphasize the importance of student initiative and creative thinking, as evidenced in the current research by the reported use of AI tools and audio-visual resources.

Intriguingly, a recent study by Hajar et al. (2024) examining postgraduate students' challenges and strategies in a Kazakhstani EMI university revealed a link between students' prior schooling and their chosen LLSs. Their findings suggest that students from mainstream schools primarily relied on examination-oriented strategies like repetition and memorization, potentially reflecting the pedagogical methods used in their earlier education. However, the findings of the present study do not align with those in Hajar et al.'s (2024) study, highlighting a balanced use of both direct and indirect strategies among participants. This can be attributed to the participants' high academic workload coupled with insufficient language skills. Consequently, participants reported a strong reliance on metacognitive strategies, such as meticulous planning and analysis of their learning process. Furthermore, they acknowledged the importance of discipline and time management for academic success. Beyond cognitive strategies, participants also employed affective strategies like playing music or dancing to manage stress and maintain work-life balance.

Thus, this succession discussed relevant findings emerged from the analysis of students' LLS use. The current study revealed a balance of using both direct and indirect LLS with a predominance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies utilized to address academic and linguistic difficulties. Additionally, participants reported employing affective

strategies to manage emotions and anxiety associated with the learning process.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes the findings from Chapter 4 through the theoretical lens of Spolsky's (2004) framework on language policy and Oxford's (1990) classification of Learning Language Strategies (LLSs). Additionally, it draws upon relevant empirical studies related to the current research topic. Specifically, the chapter delves into the key reasons influencing students' choices of EMI, the challenges they encounter within the EMI university environment, and the strategies they employ to address these challenges. This discussion revealed an unequal distribution of language resources within the Kazakhstani education system. This disparity creates inequitable access to EMI higher education for secondary school students. Mainstream schools, lacking effective procedures and linguistic preparation for EMI education, are likely to disadvantage their students in gaining admission to EMI universities.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The previous chapter discussed the main findings of the current study, which aimed at exploring ten first-year undergraduate students' experiences in an EMI university in Kazakhstan, with a specific focus on their motives for studying at that university, the linguistic and academic challenges they faced and the language learning strategies (LLSs) used to address these challenges. Notably, the participants came from Kazakh- and Russian medium schools and were directly enrolled in an EMI university without completing a foundation program. This study employed two qualitative research methods: narrative writing and semi-structured individual interviews. This chapter presents the main conclusions and explains the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Moreover, it provides future research implications and practical recommendations to facilitate a smoother transition from secondary to EMI higher education.

Major Conclusions of the Study

This qualitative study adopted Spolsky's (2004) theoretical framework on language policy, which posits the interconnectedness of three key components: language beliefs, language practices, and language management. This triangular model was used to analyze participants' motives to pursue their university studies through EMI and associated challenges. Additionally, it facilitated the exploration of how language management practices in secondary education might influence students' future academic performance at an EMI university. In addition to exploring participants' reasons for choosing an EMI university and the challenges they faced within this environment, this study sought to uncover the participants' strategic language learning efforts. Thus, Oxford's (1990) classification of LLSs was employed to analyze participants' LLSs used to address the

various challenges they faced.

Reasons Behind Students' Choice of an EMI University

As elucidated in Chapter 4, students' motives for studying at an EMI university were divided into three categories: (1) academic, (2) career-related, and (3) personal reasons. Students value the university's unique English-medium environment, perceiving it as fostering language acquisition, access to high-quality education, and specialized programs unavailable elsewhere in Kazakhstan. Career-related reasons included enhanced job prospects for EMI graduates and the university's internship opportunities, seen as valuable resume builders for securing positions in prominent companies. Finally, personal reasons, such as parental encouragement and social media advertising, also played a role in students' decisions.

Challenges Students Faced in an EMI University

The first-year students confronted a set of language-related, academic, and individual challenges, which were interrelated. Almost all participants identified linguistic problems as the most prevalent challenge affecting their academic performance. The difficulty with academic writing was apparent from the experiences of all students who reported facing challenges in following academic writing structures and presenting arguments effectively.

Additionally, students exhibited limitations in their academic vocabulary and struggled to utilize discipline-specific terminology appropriately. They attributed these challenges to a lack of preparation for an EMI education and low-quality teaching at schools. The study also revealed speaking anxiety and language barrier experienced by students when interacting with their peers and instructors. They attributed these anxieties

to the competitive nature of their EMI university, where many students come from highly selective EMI schools, namely NIS and BIL. They suggested that this constant comparison fueled their anxieties and fear of making mistakes in spoken English.

Regarding academic challenges, the students mostly faced three major academic difficulties, largely stemming from their language-related challenges: a heavy academic workload, meeting the high expectations of university instructors, and adapting to instructors' diverse accents. All first-year students who received secondary education in Kazakh or Russian faced the challenge of revising their prior knowledge in English to catch up with their peers. Furthermore, these students mentioned that they needed to analyze and work on university materials, which resulted in a significant increase in workload and posed a considerable time management challenge. Students also had difficulties in adjusting to the varied accents of their university instructors in an EMI environment as well as their expectations that all students should be familiar with the course materials that are usually taught only in highly selective EMI schools, but not necessarily covered in mainstream secondary education. Moreover, the instructors assumed students' familiarity with academic writing, formatting, and referencing conventions which are often not covered in a mainstream school curriculum.

Alongside linguistic and academic challenges, the participants encountered personal challenges related to self-confidence and socialization. Upon entering an EMI university environment, some students felt that they were less prepared for EMI education compared to their peers who had graduated from NIS and BIL schools. This perception had a negative impact on their self-confidence. Moreover, students pinpointed the difficulty of socializing within the EMI environment because graduates from NIS and BIL schools

often enroll in EMI universities as established groups, having already formed a social network. As a result, during their initial integration into the EMI environment, several participants experienced feelings of loneliness and isolation due to the challenges with socialization.

Students' LLSs to Address the Challenges

To overcome the challenges described above, participants reported employing various Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) to enhance their language proficiency and manage their academic workload. These LLSs were analyzed through the lens of Oxford's (1990) classification, which categorizes LLSs into two primary groups: direct (memory, cognitive, compensation) and indirect (metacognitive, affective, social). The findings revealed a prevalence of cognitive strategies among participants. These strategies included active note-taking during lectures, watching English-language podcasts and movies, utilizing AI writing tools (Chat GPT and Grammarly), formulating questions beforehand, and analyzing peers' papers. Some participants reported utilizing compensatory strategies to manage language anxiety and communication barriers. These strategies include avoiding long conversations with instructors and attempting to explain terminologies using simple words to make them understandable for everyone.

Complementing the direct LLSs, participants reported a frequent reliance on indirect strategies. Metacognitive strategies played a significant role in participants' academic success. These strategies included planning assignments and exam preparation in advance, minimizing distractions, critically analyzing instructor feedback, and implementing strict time management to complete their academic workload. Interestingly, the study revealed a noteworthy trend of participants actively employing affective

strategies to manage emotional pressure and maintain motivation for continued learning. Examples of these strategies used by the participants are maintaining a school-life balance, engaging in hobbies, implementing self-reward systems, and utilizing self-talk. Finally, to address a language barrier and enhance spoken language proficiency, some participants used social strategies such as attending webinars, seeking assistance from peers and instructors, engaging in conversations with instructors and international students, and participating in speaking clubs.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

As elucidated in Chapter 2, there is a scarcity of research on students' experiences during the transition from L1 medium instruction mainstream schools to EMI universities in the context of Kazakhstan as well as in other central Asian countries. In Kazakhstan, there has been a surge in research aimed at understanding the diverse challenges that Kazakhstani students and instructors encounter with EMI in higher education; however, these studies have largely focused on the voices of postgraduate students while paying scant attention to the LLSs used by the students to deal with their challenges (e.g. Karabay, 2017; Kuttybayeva, 2022; Sadykova, 2022; Yessenbekova, 2023). Hence, an adequate understanding of the challenges and LLSs used by first-year undergraduate students at EMI universities in Kazakhstan is lacking. As a consequence, the present study can be considered the first one that attempted to bridge this gap by investigating a group of first-year students' challenges and the LLSs they used to address them. More importantly, the uniqueness of this study was its focus on students who transitioned directly from L1 secondary education to EMI higher education, bypassing foundation programs and lacking prior experience in EMI environments. By doing this, the current study sheds light on the

multifaceted experiences of first-year students in an EMI university in Kazakhstan.

Another strength of this study is its methodology, which combined narrative writing and individual semi-structured interviews, as detailed in Chapter 3. Narrative writing served three key purposes: gathering background information on participants, helping the researcher construct some follow-up interview questions, and fostering rapport with the participants. As Riessman (1993, p. 70) suggests, narratives offer a rich exploration of “personal experiences and meaning-making.” The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of the research topic from various perspectives. Flexibility in question-wording and the ability to incorporate participant-driven prompts further enriched the data collection process. By employing this methodological triangulation, the study ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

In addition to these strengths, the findings of this study offer some valuable insights for Kazakhstani secondary school students planning to pursue their education in EMI universities. The research not only identified potential challenges but also the practical strategies students use to address them. Considering the low quality of teaching in mainstream schools and unequal distribution of resources within Kazakhstani secondary education, the findings of this study empower students to take a proactive approach in preparing for EMI programs by illuminating the challenges and strategies.

Despite the significance and strengths of this study, it is important to consider certain limitations, which can give more insights for future research. First of all, this study focused solely on students' perspectives on the transition from L1 medium instruction to an EMI university environment. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of this

transition for first-year students, future research should also investigate the perspectives of university instructors and administrators. Secondly, the limited sample size of ten participants and the qualitative nature of the data restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of first-year students in other Kazakhstani EMI universities. A mixed methods approach could address this limitation by incorporating quantitative data collection methods to generate a larger, more generalizable dataset. Finally, by focusing on first-year students at a single EMI university, this study may have limited the diversity of experiences captured. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, it would be useful to capture the voices of students from other EMI universities in Kazakhstan. This would allow for comparative analysis of student experiences across several EMI universities in the country.

Implications for Practice

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the participants encountered a range of challenges, including linguistic difficulties, academic demands, and individual struggles related to self-confidence and socialization. These challenges ultimately led to diverse emotional experiences, including stress, anxiety, and feelings of loneliness. The findings of this study highlighted a significant impact of participant emotions on their perceptions of the EMI university transition, potentially exacerbating the challenges they face. Given this crucial link, it is very important to offer more psychological support for first-year students. Firstly, the administration of the university should offer free individual consultations with mental health specialists. These consultations can equip students with tools to manage their emotions and reduce anxiety levels. Secondly, organizing social activities and promoting a variety of social clubs (e.g., chess club, speaking club, Japanese club) is crucial. Engaging

in these activities can foster social connections and combat feelings of isolation.

This study also highlighted practical implications concerning student preparation for EMI education. As elucidated in Chapters 4 and 5, students faced significant challenges in academic writing structure, argumentation, and APA formatting. Integrating English academic writing as a distinct subject in secondary school curricula could potentially mitigate these challenges. This approach would allow students to master basic principles of academic writing beforehand, enhancing their preparedness for EMI education. The study also revealed that some participants utilized the university's Writing Center to address their academic writing difficulties. However, a concerning finding was that not all students were aware of the Writing Center's existence or their services. Hence, increased promotion and utilization of such academic writing centers could significantly benefit students to get a deeper understanding of the structure of academic writing and provide increased opportunities to practice.

Implications for Policy and Further Research

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, research participants acknowledged the use of private tutoring as a way to get access to highly selective EMI universities. Participants explained that they received private tutoring due to the insufficient quality of English teaching in school, which failed to enhance their language abilities. Unequal distribution of learning materials within secondary schools further exacerbated this need for private lessons. Consequently, students lacking sufficient linguistic support at school had to turn to private tutoring, which bridged the gap and secured entry into EMI universities. However, as noted by Zhang and Bray (2016), shadow education can exacerbate social inequalities, as the financial burden of private lessons excludes students from families with limited

resources. This economic disparity ultimately amplifies the problem of unequal access to prestigious EMI universities among Kazakhstani students. Therefore, there is a need to take practical steps to address the issue of equity in accessing highly selective EMI universities in Kazakhstan. In this regard, policymakers should provide mainstream school teachers with proper professional development courses and reward them with financial incentives. By doing this, they can enhance teachers' pedagogical skills and prepare students for EMI education. In addition, to ensure equitable access to EMI universities for mainstream students, the government should prioritize the equal distribution of educational resources across all secondary schools.

As elucidated in Chapters 4 and 5, first-year students are psychologically vulnerable due to various challenges faced in an EMI environment. Therefore, it is very important to explore first-year students' emotional well-being, particularly, their emotional labor. Emotional labor has emerged as a relatively recent research field in applied linguistics, attracting significant attention, particularly within the context of EMI programs. Emotional labor can be conceptualized as individuals' effort or strategies to manage their emotions (Benesch & Prior, 2023). Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the impact of EMI on students' emotional experiences and explore the sociocultural forces that contribute to the emergence of various emotions. While previous studies have identified students' emotional background in EMI settings, they did not sufficiently uncover the strategies students employ to manage these emotions. This suggests that more empirical studies are needed in this direction, exploring students' emotional labor in EMI programs.

In conclusion, despite encountering challenges in participant recruitment and data

analysis, this research has proven to be a valuable learning experience. It has fostered the researcher's ability to bridge theory and findings, employ diverse research methods effectively, and critically discuss results within the existing literature. Notably, unexpected findings emerged, prompting further exploration of this research gap in potential future studies. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of transition from L1 secondary school to EMI university and pave the way for further investigations that can help a number of mainstream school students to successfully adopt at an EMI university.

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Appendix A

Thesis Title: **Transition From Secondary School to EMI University: Understanding Challenges and Language Strategy Use of Undergraduate Students in Kazakhstan**

Appendix A – 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.)

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 AI appropriate use.

Name: Aiza Bazylkanova
Date: 25.05.24

Signature:

Appendix B

Prompts for narrative essay

Write an essay in Kazakh, Russian, or English covering the following points:

1. Could you provide general information about your background (e.g., your name, age, your parents' job, the number of your brothers and sisters, your city/ village, your specialization)?
2. When did you start learning English?
3. When did you actually recognize the importance of English in your life?
4. Were you satisfied with the quality of teaching English at your school before joining this university? If yes/no, why?
5. Why did you decide to attend this university?
6. Did you receive sufficient support from your family members in terms of English learning? If yes/no, why?
7. Which particular aspects of English do you think you still have problems within EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) subjects? Why?
8. What strategies did you use/do you want to use to improve these aspects of your English?

Вопросы к повествовательному эссе

Напишите эссе, которое охватывает следующие моменты:

1. Не могли бы вы предоставить общую информацию о своем прошлом (например, ваше имя, возраст, работа ваших родителей, количество ваших братьев и сестер, ваш город/деревня, ваша специализация)?

2. Когда вы начали изучать английский язык?
3. Когда вы на самом деле осознали важность английского языка в своей жизни?
4. Были ли вы удовлетворены качеством преподавания английского языка в вашей школе до поступления в этот университет? Если да/нет, то почему?
5. Почему вы решили поступить в этот университет?
6. Получали ли вы достаточную поддержку от членов вашей семьи в плане изучения английского языка? Если да/нет, то почему?
7. С какими конкретными аспектами английского языка, по вашему мнению, у вас все еще есть проблемы в рамках предметов ЕМІ (английский как средство обучения)? Почему?
8. Какие стратегии вы использовали / хотите использовать, чтобы улучшить эти аспекты своего английского?

Баяндау эсеге арналған сұрақтар

Төмендегі тармақтарды қамтитын эссе жазуыңызды сұраймыз:

1. Сіз өзіңіздің өткеніңіз туралы жалпы ақпарат бере аласыз ба (мысалы, сіздің атыңыз, жасыңыз, ата-анаңыздың жұмысы, бауырларыңыздың саны, сіздің қалаңыз/ауылыңыз, сіздің мамандығыңыз)?
2. Ағылшын тілін қашан үйрене бастадыңыз?
3. Сіз ағылшын тілінің өміріңіздегі маңыздылығын қашан түсіндіңіз?

4. Осы университетке түскенге дейін сіздің мектебіңізде ағылшын тілін оқыту сапасына қанағаттандыңыз ба? Егер Иә / Жоқ болса, неге?

5. Неліктен сіз осы университетке түсуге шешім қабылдадыңыз?

6. Сіз ағылшын тілін үйрену тұрғысынан отбасы мүшелерінен жеткілікті қолдау алдыңыз ба? Егер Иә / Жоқ болса, неге?

7. Ағылшын тілінің қандай нақты аспектілері бар деп ойлайсыз, сізде әлі де ЕМІ пәндерінде проблемалар бар (ағылшын тілі оқу құралы ретінде)? Неліктен?

8. Ағылшын тілінің осы аспектілерін жақсарту үшін қандай стратегияларды қолдандыңыз / қолданғыңыз келеді?

Appendix C

Individual semi-structured interview protocol for first-year undergraduate students on their experience of studying at an EMI university, their academic and language-related challenges, strategies for addressing these challenges, and factors mediating the transition process from mainstream school to EMI university.

Interviewer: Aiza Bazylkanova, Master of Arts in Multilingual Education, a second-year student at Nazarbayev University, Graduate School of Education

Interviewee:

This qualitative study aims to explore first-year students' experiences in the transition from mainstream schools to English-medium universities. More specifically, the study aims to explore: (1) participants' academic and linguistic challenges; (2) strategies they use to overcome these challenges; and (3) factors mediating their language learning experiences (e.g. teachers' practices, assessment modes, and family members' involvement).

Questions:

1. Can you share some insights about your journey as an English learner?

Probe 1: How long have you been dedicated to learning English?

Probe 2: Did you get English private tutoring?

2. What motivated your decision to select this particular university?

3. In your opinion, what opportunities and perspectives does attending an English-medium university offer?

4. Have you had any prior experience with English as the medium of instruction at school?

Probe 1: If so, could you elaborate on which subjects were taught in English and reflect on the success of that experience?

5. Could you provide an overview of your experience transitioning from a Kazakh/Russian medium school to an English medium university?

Probe 1: Did you encounter initial frustration or confusion?

Probe 2: What notable changes have you observed during this transition?

6. Do you encounter any specific challenges during your time at this university?

Probe 1: If yes, could you clarify whether these challenges are academic or language-related, and provide specific examples?

7. What strategies do you employ to address these challenges?

Probe 1: Do you have particular strategies for handling language-related challenges?

Probe 2: How do you tackle academic issues?

8. Do you find your individual strategies effective, or do you also rely on advice from the internet or your professors?

9. Regarding the transition from mainstream school to an English-medium university, what factors do you believe play a significant role in mediating this transition?

Probe 1: Can you list and explain these factors, providing examples for each?

10. Have you observed an improvement in your English language proficiency since enrolling at the English-medium university?

Probe 1: If yes, which specific skills have shown improvement, and what do you attribute this progress to?

11. Could you outline your future plans and aspirations?

Probe 1: Will you be using English in your workplace?

Probe 2: Are you considering pursuing a master's degree abroad?

Probe 3: How do you envision utilizing your knowledge and language skills in the future?

Индивидуальный протокол полуструктурированного собеседования для студентов первого курса бакалавриата об их опыте обучения в университете с английским языком обучения, их академических и языковых проблемах, стратегиях решения этих проблем и факторах, опосредующих процесс перехода из обычной школы в университет с английским языком обучения.

Интервьюер: Айза Базылканова, магистр искусств в области полиязычного образования, студентка второго курса Высшей школы образования Назарбаев Университета

Интервьюируемый:

Это качественное исследование направлено на изучение опыта первокурсников при переходе из обычных школ в университеты с английским языком обучения. Более конкретно, целью исследования является изучение: (1) академических и лингвистических проблем участников; (2) стратегий, которые они используют для преодоления этих проблем; и (3) факторов, опосредующих их опыт изучения языка (например, практики учителей, способы оценки и участие членов семьи).

Вопросы:

1. Можете ли вы поделиться своим опытом изучения английского языка?

Дополнительные вопросы:

а) Как долго вы занимаетесь изучением английского языка?

б) брали вы частные уроки?

2. Почему вы выбрали этот университет?

3. По вашему мнению, какие возможности и перспективы открывает обучение в университете с английским языком обучения?

4. В школе английский использовался ли как языком обучения?

Дополнительные вопросы:

а) Если да, то не могли бы вы подробнее рассказать о том, какие предметы преподавались на английском языке, и поразмышлять об успехе этого опыта?

5. Не могли бы вы рассказать о своем опыте перехода из казахской/русской средней школы в университет с английским языком?

Дополнительные вопросы:

а) Испытывали ли вы первоначальное разочарование или замешательство?

б) Какие заметные изменения вы наблюдали во время этого перехода?

6. Сталкиваетесь ли вы с какими-либо конкретными проблемами во время вашего пребывания в этом университете?

Дополнительный вопрос:

а) Если да, не могли бы вы уточнить, являются ли эти проблемы академическими или связанными с языком, и привести конкретные примеры?

7. Какие стратегии вы используете для решения этих проблем?

Дополнительные вопросы:

а) Есть ли у вас особые стратегии решения проблем, связанных с языком?

Б) Как вы решаете академические проблемы?

8. Считаете ли вы свои индивидуальные стратегии эффективными или вы также полагаетесь на советы из Интернета или ваших профессоров?

9. Что касается перехода из обычной школы в университет с английским языком обучения, какие факторы, по вашему мнению, играют значительную роль в этом переходе?

Дополнительный вопрос:

а) Можете ли вы перечислить и объяснить эти факторы, приведя примеры для каждого из них?

10. Заметили ли вы улучшение в своем владении английским языком с момента поступления в университет с английским языком обучения?

Дополнительный вопрос:

а) Если да, то какие конкретные навыки улучшились, и с чем вы связываете этот прогресс?

11. Не могли бы вы изложить свои планы на будущее и устремления?

Дополнительные вопросы:

а) Будете ли вы использовать английский язык в работе?

б) Рассматриваете ли вы возможность получения степени магистра за границей?

с) Как вы представляете себе использование своих знаний и языковых навыков в будущем?

Бакалавриаттың бірінші курс студенттеріне арналған жеке жартылай құрылымдық сұхбат ХАТТАМАСЫ, олардың ағылшын тіліндегі оқу тәжірибесі,

академиялық және тілдік мәселелері, осы мәселелерді шешу стратегиялары және қарапайым мектептен ағылшын тіліндегі университетке ауысу процесіне делдалдық ететін факторлар.

Сұхбат алушы: Айза Базылқанова, көптілді білім беру саласындағы өнер магистрі, Назарбаев Университетінің жоғары білім беру мектебінің екінші курс студенті

Сұхбат беруші:

Бұл сапалы зерттеу қарапайым мектептерден ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университеттерге ауысу кезінде бірінші курс студенттерінің тәжірибесін зерттеуге бағытталған. Нақтырақ айтқанда, зерттеудің мақсаты: (1) қатысушылардың академиялық және лингвистикалық мәселелерін; (2) осы қиындықтарды жеңу үшін қолданатын стратегияларды; және (3) олардың тіл үйрену тәжірибесіне делдалдық ететін факторларды (мысалы, мұғалімдердің тәжірибесі, бағалау әдістері және отбасы мүшелерінің қатысуы) зерттеу болып табылады.

Сұрақтар:

1. Ағылшын тілін үйрену тәжірибесімен бөлісе аласыз ба?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

а) сіз ағылшын тілін қанша уақыт оқыдыңыз?

б) ағылшын тілін үйренудің артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктері туралы не ойлайсыз?

2. Неліктен сіз бұл университетті таңдадыңыз?

3. Сіздің ойыңызша, университетте ағылшын тілінде оқытудың қандай мүмкіндіктері мен перспективалары ашылады?

4. Мектепте ағылшын тілі оқыту тілі ретінде қолданылды ма?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

а) олай болса, ағылшын тілінде қандай пәндер оқытылғаны туралы толығырақ айтып, осы тәжірибенің сәттілігі туралы ойлана аласыз ба?

5. Қазақ/орыс орта мектебінен ағылшын тілді университетке көшу тәжірибеңіз туралы айта аласыз ба?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

а) сіз алғашқы көңілсіздікті немесе шатасуды бастан өткердіңіз бе?

б) осы ауысу кезінде сіз қандай маңызды өзгерістерді байқадыңыз?

6. Сіз осы университетте болған кезде қандай да бір нақты мәселелерге тап болдыңыз ба?

Қосымша сұрақ:

а) егер солай болса, бұл мәселелердің академиялық немесе тілге қатысты екенін нақтылап, нақты мысалдар келтіре аласыз ба?

7. Бұл мәселелерді шешу үшін қандай стратегияларды қолданасыз?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

а) сізде тілге қатысты мәселелерді шешудің арнайы стратегиялары бар ма?

б) академиялық мәселелерді қалай шешесіз?

8. Сіз өзіңіздің жеке стратегияларыңызды тиімді деп санайсыз ба, әлде Интернеттен немесе профессорларыңыздан кеңестерге сүйенесіз бе?

9. Кәдімгі мектептен ағылшын тіліндегі университетке ауысу туралы айтатын болсақ, бұл ауысуда қандай факторлар маңызды рөл атқарады деп ойлайсыз?

Қосымша сұрақ:

а) олардың әрқайсысына мысалдар келтіре отырып, осы факторларды тізіп, түсіндіре аласыз ба?

10. Сіз ағылшын тілінде оқитын университетке түскеннен бері ағылшын тілін

менгерудің жақсарғанын байқадыңыз ба?

Қосымша сұрақ:

а) олай болса, қандай нақты дағдылар жақсарды және сіз бұл прогресті немен байланыстырасыз?

11.Болашақ жоспарларыңыз бен ұмтылыстарыңызды айта аласыз ба?

Қосымша сұрақтар:

а) Сіз жұмыста ағылшын тілін қолданасыз ба?

б) сіз шетелде магистр дәрежесін алуды қарастырып жатырсыз ба?

с) болашақта өз біліміңіз бен тілдік дағдыларыңызды пайдалануды қалай елестетесіз?

Appendix D

Gatekeeper E-mail/ Letter

Dear [Gatekeeper Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Aiza Bazytkanova, and I am currently embarking on a research project as part of my Master's thesis at the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education.

My research project, subject to approval by the Nazarbayev University Research Ethics Committee, aims to explore the experiences of first-year undergraduate students studying through English-medium of Instruction (EMI). Specifically, I will be investigating their academic and language-related challenges, the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges, and the factors mediated their transition from secondary education to higher education conducted in English.

To accomplish this research, I am writing to kindly request your permission to access your department for the purpose of recruiting research participants. I am particularly interested in first-year undergraduate students who meet the following criteria:

- Kazakh nationality
- Aged 18 years or above
- Graduated from Kazakhstani mainstream schools

The research activities, which will consist of narrative writing and individual semi-structured interviews, are expected to span approximately one month, scheduled to take place between October and November 2023. The exact timing and dates for these activities will be arranged in a way that is most convenient for both the research participants and their academic calendar.

I assure you that this research will be conducted with the utmost professionalism

and adherence to ethical standards. The data collected will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and used solely for academic research purposes. All answers and results from the research are kept strictly confidential.

Your assistance in granting access to your department for participant recruitment would be invaluable to the success of my research project. If you have any concerns, questions, or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at aiza.bazylkanova@nu.edu.kz or by phone number +7 747 420 9066.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to the possibility of collaborating with your department and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in this area of study.

Yours sincerely,

Aiza Bazylkanova

Appendix E**INFORMED CONSENT FORM****Transition From Secondary School to EMI University: Understanding Challenges
and Languages Strategy Use of Undergraduate Students in Kazakhstan**

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to the interview with Bazylkanova Aiza, a second-year students of Multilingual Education, MA GSE in order to discuss your experience of studying through English-medium of Instruction. This study aims to explore challenges posed by the transition from mainstream secondary education to higher education, where English is used as a medium of instruction. The participants' strategic language learning efforts while interacting with different contextual factors (e.g., teachers' practices, assessment modes, peer mediation, and family members' involvement) are also examined.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 30-35 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks associated with this study. The benefits which may be expected from this interview is that your opinions, arguments, positions and examples help us discover the challenges that might be experience by future candidates, language learning strategies to cope with those challenges, and factors mediated the transition period. It is important to note that findings of this study might be helpful for all educational stakeholder, including students, educators, and policymakers in the field of higher education.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may also be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals. If you have questions or want a copy or summary of this study's results, you can contact the Master's Thesis supervisor at the email address or telephone provided below.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The researcher of this project is:

Bazylkanova Aiza

Master of Arts in Multilingual Education second-year student

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

Phone number: +7474209066

Email: Aiza.bazylkanova@nu.edu.kz

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, Anas Hajar, via email anas.hajar@nu.edu.kz or telephone **+7 747 323 15 62**

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 NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@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 researcher and Professor Anas Hajar 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.

Participant

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

Researcher

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ФОРМА ИНФОРМИРОВАННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ

Переход из средней школы в университет с английским языком обучения: понимание проблем и использование языковых стратегии студентами бакалавриата в Казахстане

ОПИСАНИЕ: Вы приглашены на собеседование с Базылкановой Аизой, студенткой второго курса факультета многоязычного образования магистратуры GSE, чтобы обсудить ваш опыт обучения с использованием английского языка-средства обучения. Данное исследование направлено на изучение проблем, связанных с переходом от основного среднего образования к высшему, где английский язык используется в качестве средства обучения. Также рассматриваются стратегические усилия участников по изучению языка при взаимодействии с различными контекстуальными факторами (например, практика учителей, способы оценки, посредничество сверстников и вовлечение членов семьи).

ВРЕМЯ УЧАСТИЯ: Ваше участие займет примерно 30-35 минут.

РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА: Данное исследование не сопряжено с какими-либо рисками. Преимущества, которые можно ожидать от этого собеседования, заключаются в том, что ваши мнения, аргументы, позиции и примеры помогают нам выявить проблемы, с которыми могут столкнуться будущие кандидаты, стратегии изучения языка, позволяющие справиться с этими проблемами, и факторы, опосредовавшие переходный период. Важно отметить, что результаты этого исследования могут быть полезны всем заинтересованным сторонам в сфере образования, включая студентов, преподавателей и политиков в области высшего образования.

ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКА: Ваше участие в данном исследовании является добровольным, и у Вас есть право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время без каких-либо последствий, в этом случае запись и заметки будут уничтожены. Хотя вопросы и не предполагают затрагивание каких-либо деликатных тем, Вы имеете право отказаться отвечать на определенные вопросы. Если у Вас есть вопросы или Вы хотите получить копию или краткое изложение результатов этого исследования, Вы можете связаться с научным руководителем магистерской работы по адресу электронной почты или телефону, указанным ниже. Результаты этого исследования также могут быть представлены на научных или профессиональных встречах или опубликованы в научных журналах.

КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ:

Исследователем этого проекта является:

Базылканова Аиза

Магистр искусств в области многоязычного образования, студент второго курса Высшая школа образования Назарбаев университета

Номер телефона: +7474209066

Электронная почта: Aiza.bazylkanova@nu.edu.kz

Вопросы: Если у вас есть какие-либо вопросы, опасения или жалобы по поводу этого исследования, его процедур, рисков и преимуществ, свяжитесь с научным

руководителем магистерской диссертации по этой студенческой работе Анасом Хаджаром по электронной почте anas.hajar@nu.edu.kz или позвонить по телефону +7 747 323 15 62

Независимый контакт: Если вы не удовлетворены тем, как проводится это исследование, или если у вас есть какие-либо опасения, жалобы или общие вопросы об исследовании или ваших правах как участника, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с Исследовательским комитетом NUGSE по адресу gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz Пожалуйста, подпишите это согласие, если вы согласны участвовать в этом исследовании.

- Я внимательно ознакомился с предоставленной информацией;
- Мне была предоставлена полная информация относительно цели и процедур исследования;
- Я понимаю, как будут использоваться собранные данные, и что любая конфиденциальная информация будет доступна только исследователю и профессору Анасу Хаджару и не будет раскрыта никому другому;
- Я понимаю, что я волен отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время без объяснения причин;
- Полностью осознавая все вышеизложенное, я даю согласие по собственной воле принять участие в этом исследовании.

Участник исследования:

Подпись: _____ Дата: _____

Дополнительную копию этой подписанной и датированной формы согласия вы можете оставить себе.

В соответствии с законодательством Республики Казахстан физическое лицо, не достигшее 18-летнего возраста, считается ребенком. Любому участнику, попадающему в эту категорию, должна быть выдана форма родительского согласия, подписанная по крайней мере одним из его/ее родителей или опекунов.

Исследователь:

Подпись: _____ Дата: _____

АҚПАРАТТАНДЫРЫЛҒАН КЕЛІСІМ НЫСАНЫ

**Орта мектептен ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университетке көшу:
Қазақстандағы бакалавриат студенттерінің проблемаларын және тіл
стратегияларын қолдануларын түсіну**

СИПАТТАМА: Сіз GSE магистратурасының көптілді білім беру факультетінің екінші курс студенті Базылқанова Аизамен сұхбаттасуға шақырылдыңыз, ол сіздің ағылшын тілін-оқу құралын қолдана отырып оқу тәжірибеңізді талқылайды. Бұл зерттеу негізгі орта білімнен жоғары білімге ауысуға байланысты мәселелерді зерттеуге бағытталған, мұнда ағылшын тілі оқыту құралы ретінде қолданылады. Қатысушылардың әртүрлі контекстік факторлармен (мысалы, мұғалімдердің тәжірибесі, бағалау әдістері, құрдастарының делдалдығы және отбасы мүшелерін тарту) өзара әрекеттесу кезінде тіл үйренуге бағытталған стратегиялық күш-жігері де қарастырылады.

ӨТКІЗІЛЕТІН УАҚЫТ: сіздің қатысуыңыз шамамен 30-35 минутты алады.

ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫНА ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУІПТЕРІ МЕН

АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ: бұл зерттеуде ешқандай қауіп жоқ. Бұл сұхбаттан күтуге болатын артықшылықтар - сіздің пікірлеріңіз, дәлелдеріңіз, ұстанымдарыңыз бен мысалдарыңыз болашақ үміткерлердің алдында тұрған қиындықтарды, осы мәселелерді шешуге арналған тіл үйрену стратегияларын және өтпелі кезеңге делдалдық ететін факторларды анықтауға көмектеседі. Маңыздысы, бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері барлық мүдделі тараптарға, соның ішінде студенттерге, оқытушыларға және жоғары білім саясаткерлеріне пайдалы болуы мүмкін.

ҚАТЫСУШЫ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ: сіздің осы зерттеуге қатысуыңыз ерікті болып табылады және сіздің келісіміңізді қайтарып алуға немесе кез келген уақытта ешқандай салдарсыз қатысуды тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар, бұл жағдайда жазба мен жазбалар жойылады. Сұрақтар кез-келген нәзік тақырыптарды қамтымаса да, сіз белгілі бір сұрақтарға жауап беруден бас тартуға құқығыңыз бар. Егер сізде сұрақтар туындаса немесе осы зерттеу нәтижелерінің көшірмесін немесе қысқаша мазмұнын алғыңыз келсе, төмендегі электрондық пошта немесе телефон арқылы магистратураның ғылыми жетекшісіне хабарласа аласыз. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері ғылыми немесе кәсіби кездесулерде ұсынылуы немесе ғылыми журналдарда жариялануы мүмкін.

БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:**Бұл жобаның зерттеушісі:**

Базылқанова Аиза

Көптілді білім беру саласындағы өнер магистрі, екінші курс студенті

Назарбаев Университетінің жоғары білім беру мектебі

Телефон нөмірі: +7474209066

Электрондық пошта: Aiza.bazylkanova@nu.edu.kz

Сұрақтарыңыз: егер сізде осы зерттеуге, оның процедураларына, тәуекелдері мен артықшылықтарына қатысты сұрақтарыңыз, алаңдаушылықтарыңыз немесе шағымдарыңыз болса, осы студенттік жұмыс бойынша магистрлік диссертацияның жетекшісі Анас Хаджарға электрондық пошта арқылы хабарласыңыз anas.hajar@nu.edu.kz немесе қоңырау шалыңыз +7 747 323 15 62

ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТТАРЫ: Егер сіз бұл зерттеудің қалай жүргізілетініне қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе зерттеу немесе қатысушы ретіндегі

құқықтарыңыз туралы алаңдаушылық, шағымдар немесе жалпы сұрақтарыңыз болса, пугсе зерттеу комитетіне хабарласыңыз gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz
Егер сіз осы зерттеуге қатысуға келіссеңіз, осы Келісімге қол қойыңыз.

- * Мен берілген ақпаратпен мұқият таныстым;
- * Маған Зерттеудің мақсаты мен процедуралары туралы толық ақпарат берілді;
- Мен жиналған деректердің қалай пайдаланылатынын және кез келген құпия ақпарат тек зерттеуші және профессор Анас Хаджарға қолжетімді болатынын және басқа ешкімге жария етілмейтінін түсінемін;
- * Мен түсіндірусіз кез келген уақытта зерттеуге қатысудан бас тартуға еркін екенімді түсінемін;
- Жоғарыда айтылғандардың барлығын толық біле отырып, мен осы зерттеуге қатысуға өз еркіммен келісім беремін.

Қатысушы:

Қолы: _____ Күні: _____

Сіз осы қол қойылған және күні көрсетілген келісім формасының қосымша көшірмесін сақтай аласыз.

Қазақстан Республикасының заңнамасына сәйкес 18 жасқа толмаған жеке тұлға бала болып саналады. Осы санатқа жататын кез-келген қатысушыға ата-анасының немесе қамқоршысының кем дегенде біреуі қол қойған ата-аналық келісім нысаны берілуі керек.

Зерттеуші:

Қолы: _____ Күні: _____