

LITERACY GAP: IMPLICATIONS FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

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PRESENTATION

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- Wide gap in academic achievement
- Kazakh-medium schools performed worse than Russian-medium schools

Theoretical Assumption

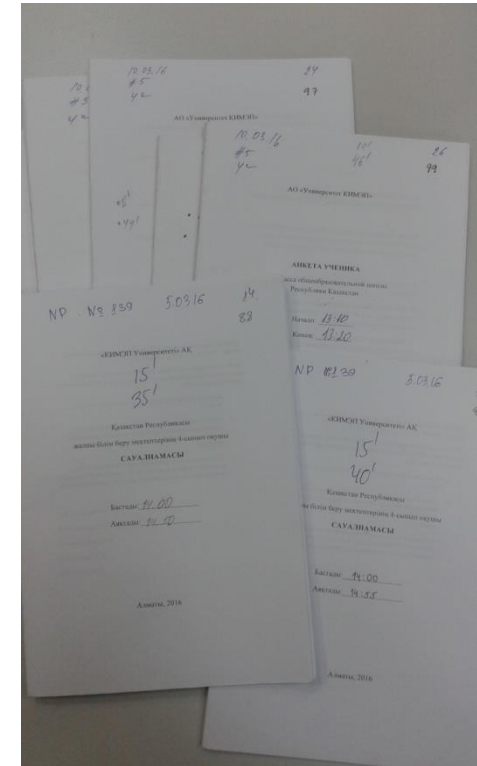
- Literacy is not just knowing how to read and write, but also to be able to apply this in specific contexts (Scribner and Cole, 1981)
- Literacy is a social practice (Street, 2003)
- Literacy is contextualized and embedded in social relations of power and equity

Methodology

- **Site:** 10 Russian-medium and Kazakh-medium schools in Almaty
- **Participants:** 241 students, Grade 4
- **When:** Spring 2016
- **Tool:** a test designed after PIRLS model

Questionnaire and Literacy test

- **Background questionnaire**
- **Literacy test - four parts**
 - **Two texts:** fiction and non-fiction
 - **Non-fiction** text from Grade 4 science textbook (Дүниетану and Познание мира, Алматыкітаб, 2015)
 - **Fiction:** a translated story from English
 - **Literacy tasks include:**
 - expressing and justifying an opinion
 - reading comprehension
 - retrieving an explicitly stated information
 - making straightforward inferences
 - demonstrating functional literacy
 - demonstrating logical reasoning in argumentation



Results

- There are more students in Russian-medium school who use MOI at home
- Bilingualism in Kazakh and Russian is higher in Kazakh-medium schools
- More than third of students from Russian-medium schools have access to other languages

Table 1. Home language, %

What language do you use to communicate in addition to the medium of instruction at school?	Only MOI	Russian	Kazakh	Other languages
Kazakh-medium school	25.3	69	-	6
Russian-medium school	43.4	-	17	39.6

Results

- Majority of students from Russian-medium schools read in Russian outside of school

Table 2. Language of reading at home, %

In what language do prefer reading at home?	Only MOI	Russian	Kazakh
Kazakh-medium school	48.6	24.6	-
Russian-medium school	76	-	1

Results

- Students in Russian-medium schools are more likely to come from more economically advantageous households

Table 3. Size of home library (proxy of reading and cultural practices), %

Number of books	0-10	11- 25	26-100	101-200	More than 200
Kazakh school	28.1	45	21.1	2.1	3.5
Russian school	16	24	36	18	5

Table 4. Proxy of socio-economical status, %

Ownership of the following items	Own room	Own smart phone/tablet
Kazakh-medium school	33.8	54
Russian-medium school	54.5	80

Results

- on average students from Kazakh-medium school spent 25% more time on the test than their peers from Russian-language schools
- Students from Kazakh-medium schools performed worse in all parts of the test

Table 6. Reading comprehension, % of correct answers

	Russian-medium school	Kazakh-medium school
Where else do animals get water besides water reservoirs? (after reading an extract from a grade 4 textbook)	73	23.9

Results

Table 7. Functional literacy, % of correct answers

	Russian-medium school	Kazakh-medium school
If you want to watch a cartoon, what time do you need to turn on TV? (after reading a TV schedule)	89	38

Table 8. Inference, % of correct answers

	Russian-medium school	Kazakh-medium school
Why do many desert plants have long and thin leaves?	83	31

Results

Table 9. Expressing opinion, % of responses

Did you like the story? Explain your answer	Russian-medium school	Kazakh-medium school
0 – irrelevant answer or no answer	8	44.3
1 – partial comprehension: either feeling or explanation	55	48.5
2 – complete comprehension: feeling + explanation + one or more reasons	36	7

Findings

Literacy gap due to:

- Socio-economic factors and cultural capital (e.g., home literacy practices)
- Insufficient language proficiency in MOI
- Differences in state standards
- Differences in understanding of literacy

Discussion

1. Reevaluate current literacy curriculum and intended learning outcomes.
2. Prepare literacy specialists and provide teacher training in literacy
3. Consider mother-tongue education or support program for L2 learners.
4. Develop support programs for children from socially disadvantageous groups.
5. Start literacy campaign and parent education.



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Questions?