

THE READING–WRITING RELATIONSHIP IN YOUNG LEARNERS’ KAZAKH, RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH TEST PERFORMANCE

T-5

Akhmetova, Aigul

University of Szeged, Doctoral School of Education

Keywords: language assessment; reading; writing

This paper examines reading and writing performances in three Kazakhstani sub-samples of sixth grade students. Kazakhstan is a multilingual state where most people are bilingual, and where in 2013 English was instituted as the foreign language to be taught from grade five on.

Research has demonstrated the interdependence of first (L1) and second (L2) languages (Nikolov & Csapó, 2010). However, not all issues involving Cyrillic writing systems have been clarified. This paper presents the first results from such a project by piloting adapted and adopted instruments in a new culture.

The participants were sixth graders from Pavlodar. $N_1=237$ Kazakh native speakers, $N_2=289$ Russian native speakers and $N_3= 282$ English language learners took an online test via the eDia system. The original English booklet (cf. Nikolov & Csapó, 2010) was translated to Kazakh and Russian, and these three versions were administered to each of the respective sub-samples. The booklet consists of two reading tests (20 items) and two writing tests (guided composition tasks). Students got immediate, automated feedback for their reading tests. For the writing tests no automated feedback was possible. The constraints of the study allowed only for traditional school style scoring, based on content and spelling.

The reliability of the whole instrument in Kazakh is Chronbach’s $\alpha=.806$; in Russian: $.822$; in English: $.862$. The reliability values for the writing component were not satisfactory for either language ($.62 \leq \alpha \leq .8$). The correlations between the reading and the writing components are in Kazakh: $r=-.068$ (n.s.); in Russian: $.131$ ($p<.05$); and in English: $-.018$ (n.s.). On one of the English writing tests, Kazakh native speakers outperformed Russian native speakers, while maternal education did not have an effect on students’ performance in either group. The reading instruments proved appropriate to be used in the Kazakh context. However, the writing tests need to be improved. The apparent independence of reading and writing performances in this study may be due to the compound nature of the writing score. At the same time, the weak but significant correlation emerging between the English reading and writing scores may also be a signal of the effect of the not-transparent orthography of the language, as opposed to the transparency of Kazakh and Russian.