

READING STRATEGIES AND READING PERFORMANCES OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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The aim of this study was to examine 14-year-old students' reading strategies while performing reading comprehension tests in English, Kazakh, and Russian. The low performance of Kazakhstani 15-year-old students in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) (M=390 in 2009 and M=387 in 2018) in reading literacy may be worrisome (OECD, 2019). It may indicate that young learners are not equipped with "key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society" (PISA, 2018). Poor readers or students who have difficulties in reading may not properly use reading strategies, and fail to understand the meaning of texts. An early assessment in reading comprehension and reading strategies may be considered as one of the ways to identify the causes behind the unfavorable results in reading literacy. Reading strategies are essential while reading a text; they contribute to gaining meaning, and facilitate comprehension (Garner, 1987, 1994; Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013).

The study included young learners from seven secondary schools which were randomly chosen. Students performed the tests in English, Kazakh and Russian, and they also responded to questions about reading strategies. Participants were grade 8 students (N=675). The research questions were as follows: (1) How well do the students perform in each language test? (2) How often do the adolescents apply reading strategies while reading? (3) What is the role of reading strategies in reading tests in one's native language (Kazakh and/or Russian) and in tests in English as a foreign language? The reading tests in English, Kazakh and Russian were self-developed, the reading strategies questionnaire was adopted from the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS), Version 1.0 by Kouider Mokhtari and Carla Reichard (cf. Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Five experts translated twice back and forth the reading strategies questionnaire into students' native language (Kazakh and Russian). All instruments were administered via the eDia online platform for diagnostic assessment. Cronbach's alpha showed good reliability in all instruments: for the reading tests in the three languages, α was .93, and for the questionnaire, it was .90.

Although students had moderate results in all languages (English: M=41%, SD=24.54; Kazakh: M=50%, SD=27.91%; Russian: M=56%, SD=30.52%), the reading strategies questionnaire indicated a medium score (M=2.69, SD=.487) of the strategies when reading academic materials. Interestingly, regression analysis showed that R-squared did not equal zero, albeit the correlation between the model and the dependent variables were statistically significant. Findings indicate that reading strategies in grade 8 affect reading outcomes, and the probability that students may use several other strategies while performing reading tests may be evident.