**European experience of multilingualism
and the development of multilingual
education in Kazakhstan**

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Abstract

This literature review article is dedicated to the issues and notion of multilingualism, particularly in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is a multiethnic country where more than 130 different ethnic groups reside. At present, a fast multilingual advancement is taking place in Kazakhstan. The study explores the origins and definitions of multilingualism, the role of multilingualism in the development of the Kazakhstani education system, and the models of multilingual education in Kazakhstan. Different approaches and definitions in terms of multilingualism and the performance and implementation of multilingual education are presented. The development of multilingual education in the Kazakhstani educational system plays a pivotal role and it is rapidly developing. The implementation of multilingual education in this country aims at integrating and internationalization of Kazakhstan to the world's educational and scientific societies. Multilingualism is also widespread in some of the European countries. Several approaches related to the multilingualism and multilingual education are indicated in this article. This paper introduces the challenges and suggestions of diverse alternatives of multilingual education in Kazakhstani higher education institutions.

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Keywords: multilingualism, multilingual education, Kazakhstan, higher education, educational policy

Multilingual Policy and Multilingual Education in Europe

According to Joze Manuel Vez (2009), multilingualism is regarded as *“the plus factor for European integration, competitiveness and the growth and better jobs.”* In addition, it should be mentioned that in the context of European education according to Leonard Orban, European Union Commissioner for Multilingualism, multilingual education is defined as the phenomenon, which well involves three or more languages rather than only two (European Commission, 2005). The Council of Europe designates plurilingual competence as an *“ability to use languages for the purpose of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency of varying degrees, in several languages, and experience of several cultures”* (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009, p. 11).

It should be mentioned that the role and principles of multilingualism are being expanded and elaborated in the European Union. European Commission published an official report in 1995, which is devoted to education identifying the principle goal of trilingualism of all the European countries (The European Union, 1995).

Nowadays, multilingualism and multilingual education have rapidly been developing. Multilingualism is becoming one of the most significant foci in the European Union's policy. The focus is mainly paid to the implementation of multilingualism and its semantic part development in European countries. One of the basic issues of multilingual policy is language and cultural diversity among member states (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2011).

The posser of multilingualism is so important that it was reflected in the policy documents of the European Commission where its relevant issues were discussed much. The key document of *“The New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism”* (European Commission, 2005) reasons *“commitment to multilingualism in the European Union”* and for *“promoting multilingualism in European society, in the economy and in the Commission itself.”* This document also indicates multilingual promotion in different fields embracing the social, economic, and other spectrums (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2011).

Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2011) explore the semantic field of multilingualism in the framework of European Union policy in different periods and describe each semantic development of multilingualism differently depending on time. Figure 1 illustrates multilingualism that embraces *“mother tongue”* and several other domains related to foreign language learning. Learning a foreign language as well as language skills and motivation in this field shapes the economic and employment issues of the countries

Figure 1. The semantic field of multilingualism in EULMP in 2000 (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2011)

allowing people to increase the mobility in employment and economy as well. By creating this model, the Lisbon strategy has already an impact on language policy and multilingualism through the description of language skills and foreign languages.

According to the European Commission (2005) in the frame of European countries, it is normal that the use of three languages and the knowledge of languages allow people move among the nations for different purposes involving educational and professional reasons.

One of the most significant reasons for choosing the given model of the semantic field of multilingualism in EULMP is that, to our knowledge, it seems to be more applicable in the context of Kazakhstani multilingualism policy development and multilingual education system. The project of “Trinity of Languages” might serve as one of the economic reasons for multilingualism policy development in Kazakhstan. The implementation of multilingual education reform in educational institutions may serve as the possibility for further investment and employment growth.

The most important priority in the given model is the involvement of “mother tongue,” which in Kazakhstani context is regarded as a must while integrating and implementing multilingual education. The core reason for multilingualism policy in Kazakhstan is the achievement of mother tongue knowledge, which means that through multilingual education we can enhance the knowledge and use of Kazakh language (mother tongue). Simultaneously, the utmost attention is paid to acquire foreign languages and currently Kazakhstan is working hard on the development of learning foreign languages that embraces the implementation and practicing of different kinds of learning methods, language skills, and the significance of foreign language use.

According to the European Commission (2005), multilingualism is designated as “a person’s ability to use several languages and the co-existence of different language communities in one geographical area.” Moreover, the Commission’s long-term task is to

teach at least two foreign languages and enlarge individual multilingualism because everyone should acquire practical skills in foreign languages including their mother tongue (European Commission, 2005). Following the European Commission (2005), they elaborated a strategy with several key fields for action in the educational system and practices that contain national strategies emphasizing the “*need for national plans to give coherence and direction to actions to promote multilingualism amongst individuals and in society generally*”.

National Examples of Multilingual Education in the European Context

Case of the Nordic countries

A significant example of multilingual education systems is essential to research the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) because of their multilingual developments.

Finland is regarded as one of those countries that possess two (Swedish and Finnish) official languages (Tucker, 1999 cited in Björklund, Björklund, & Sjöholm, 2013). Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden participate in *Network for Researchers of Multilingualism and Multilingual education, RoMME (2011–2013)* to develop multilingual policy in all of these states. Notwithstanding, not only a huge amount of similarities are found in these four countries, but also they have differences in the development of language programs and the language of language use. To develop such a complicated task, the network of researchers in Nordic countries tries to organize the congregations for the researchers involving the graduate and post-doctoral researchers, lecturers, and experts in identifying the advantages and disadvantages of multilingual education (Björklund et al., 2013).

All these four Nordic countries have similar language-learning system in primary schools and their compulsory education is prolonged to 9 years. Foreign language learning in these countries starts mostly from the primary education level as it is demonstrated out in Table 1. As it is indicated in Table 1, English language is considered to be the predominant language among the others and most of the learners choose English as their first foreign language (Björklund et al., 2013).

As shown Table 1, the development of foreign language education in comprehensive school illustrates that the languages are added gradually, parallelly, and simultaneously with each other. Nordic countries disseminated the syllabuses for integrating and teaching of national minority languages as a mother tongue in addition to the foreign language program. In spite of that, all these four Nordic countries have the same research area they put much effort into developing the languages differently. It is in Norway's interest to develop national language teaching for immigrants to be able to use the national study

Table 1. The general national frames of foreign language in primary education

Foreign language education in comprehensive school (in general)	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
	English (Grade 3) + another language (Grade 7)	English (Grade 3 or 4) + the other national language (Grade 7 or 3) + 1 optional language (Grade 8)	English (Grade 1 or 3) + another language (Grade 7)	English (Grade 1) + another language (Grade 6)

Note. Source: Björklund, Björklund, and Sjöholm (2013).

programs (Björklund et al., 2013). We should state here that multilingual education in Nordic communities was developed and spread from the early school environment.

International experience in multilingual education demonstrates two basic groups of multilingual education: weak and strong. The first means the usage of only one language, whereas the latter implies the implementation and fluency in several languages. Out of 178 multilingual countries in the world, only 5 have implemented multilingual education successfully. According to the results of PISA 2015, only Finland, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain (The Basque country), and Luxemburg have best practices and consequences in the sphere of multilingual education (Irsaliyev et al., 2017). Let us consider the development of multilingual education in Finnish schools and the way they allocate time for language learning (Figure 2).

In general, considering the success factors behind the Finnish model, it is important to point out that, in case of Finland, the key points of multilingual education development are the right time arrangement of language learning in school grades and the high expenditure on education. Moreover, future teachers get compulsory subject blocks on multilingualism as a part of their academic program (Table 2). The implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) involving the universities where they acquire 50% of subjects in English on multilingual education theory and practice is an additional element that addresses multilingualism. Thus, after the graduation of secondary school,

Figure 2. The multilingual education model in Finnish schools with time allocation for each language, % (source: Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 149)

Table 2. Main peculiarities of five countries in multilingual education

No.	Country	Main peculiarities in multilingual education
1	Finland	Most of the school leavers are proficient in four languages
		Expenditure per student is \$9,579 (7 times more than in Kazakhstan)
2	The Netherlands	Teaching in two languages from Grades 1–7, in three languages Grades 7–8, in English from Grade 9 using CLIL
		Students speak in three languages
		Expenditure per student is \$10,552 (7.7 times more than in Kazakhstan)
3	Switzerland	Lower proficiency of L2 and other in the adult population
		Most school leavers speak in two languages, half of them in three languages
		Expenditure per student is \$15,891 (11 times more than in Kazakhstan)
4	Spain (Basque country)	Choice for secondary school students to choose the models of multilingual education in public or private schools
		Absence of Basque language relation to others
		Expenditure per student is \$9,769 (7 times more than in Kazakhstan)
5	Luxembourg	Language instructions are: German and French
		English as a foreign language begins from Grade 7
		After school graduation, the students know in three languages
		Expenditure per student is \$16,200 (11 times more than in Kazakhstan)

Note. Source: Irsaliyev et al. (2017).

most of the students are already competent in four languages embracing Finnish, English, Swedish, German, and French. Ranging from 40% to 70% of subject content is taught in English within 5 years (Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 151).

Multilingual Education in European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

English language is regarded as the language of globalization, and HEIs are competing in the world level, as English became the global lingua franca (Coleman, 2006; Graddol, 2006 cited in Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013).

“The real meaning of globalization is multilingualism” (Shohamy, 2007, p. 132). The case of higher education is varying in comparison with the schools. English language is regarded as the predominant language among the HEIs and in the scientific field. All the basic domains of higher education (scientific research, education, and community services) are provided mostly using the English language notwithstanding the merits of national languages in Flanders they applied to utilize English almost in every aspect. For instance, in the context of Brussels, in higher education, they implemented both Dutch and French as the language of instruction, but The Flemish Ministry of Education permitted to use English in specific situations such as courses conducted by the

international professors, programs, and training for foreign students (Janssens, Mamadouh, & Maracz, 2013).

The French community tends to arrange curriculum in English and it leads to the frequent usage of this language in all three cycled levels of education such as bachelor, master, and post-academic degrees. Furthermore, the European Union plays a pivotal role in it while initiating different international programs for student exchange like Erasmus or Marie Curie, which results in the enhancement of English language use developing the mobility settings among both students and teachers (Janssens et al., 2013).

Janssens, Mamadouh, and Maracz (2013) exemplify that there is a cooperation between French-speaking (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and Dutch-speaking (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) universities in Brussels, which provide trilingual (French, Dutch, and English) education for the civil engineers. However, in spite of such good prestige of universities, the Flemish Ministry of Education insists that all the teaching staff who teach in English should prove their language proficiency according to the European standard C1 by passing tests. Moreover, foreign-invited professors should also obtain a B2 level of the Dutch language to fit their environment (Janssens et al., 2013).

As for the case of Finland, there are several HEIs where multilingual education is spread. For example, the University of Vaasa and Abo Akademy provide teacher training in two stages: undergraduate – 180 ECTS and Masters – 120 ECTS. The subjects on multilingualism, pedagogy, and major subjects are considered to be compulsory. In Abo Akademy, the students learn three credits on the theory of multilingual education and two credits go to the practice of multilingual education and 50% of these subjects are taught in English language (Irsaliyev et al., 2017). The University of Oulu and the University of Jyväskylä provide 40%–70% of teaching in English in the 5-year CLIL teaching. In addition, the University of Helsinki and the University of Turku contribute to CLIL training for teachers a lot (p. 151).

Having analyzed Finland's contribution to the development of multilingual education in HEIs, it is obvious that much effort is spent on the provision of multilingual teaching staff and more credits for university students. While providing teachers with CLIL education and at the same time, the universities facilitate multilingual subject blocks for students starting from the beginning of university education most percentage of which is supplied in the English language.

Another example of multilingual education in HEIs refers to the case of Basque Country. Doiz et al. (2013) argue that it will be helpful to analyze one particular multilingual university to understand its picture. If to exemplify we can take Basque autonomous

community that has the University of Basque Country, which is estimated to be the bilingual one. This country witnesses the usage of two official languages such as Spanish, and the majority and minority one is the Basque language. The given university also witnessed language policy development that comes together with the internationalization process. It brought about three strategic actions and the first was dedicated to the development of student exchange and academic mobility, teaching staff mobility. The second one was dedicated to the international network, research, and university-wide involvement settings. The latter encompasses the production of multilingualism program, which was launched in 2005–2006 and approved by the Governing Council. In the frame of the multilingual program, students are enabled to enroll for the courses conducted in foreign languages (Doiz et al., 2013). There are several objectives of multilingualism program of the Basque University:

- to proceed at the tertiary level with experimental trilingual level utilized at pre-university level (Basque, Spanish, and English used as languages of instruction);
- to enhance students' foreign language skills and to conduct research in a foreign language;
- to develop students' work;
- to adjust the pursuit of post-graduate degrees abroad;
- to engage foreign students and teaching staff.

There were three paralleled groups in aforementioned three languages with the subjects in three languages in this university within the multilingualism program framework. Students have the right to choose in what language to study and what compulsory specific subject to choose. However, the optional courses are taught only in one of these languages. In 2010–2011, the University of Basque Country witnessed that, in the frame of multilingualism program, the number of students' increased 1,300 and over 400 qualified teaching staff who acquired the indispensable level (C1) of official language proficiency (Doiz, et al., 2013, p. 1409).

Multilingualism and multilingual education are expanded in the frame of South-East European University, which is situated in Macedonia, created in 2001. The educators in Macedonia encounter the obstacles in terms of languages in their work as it is regarded a multilingual nation (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2012). Xhaferi and Xhaferi (2012) conducted a research dedicated to the issues of teachers' perception of multilingual education and implementation of teaching techniques in multilingual groups in higher education. The research sample consisted of 50 professors and young assistants of that university faculty.

For the data analysis, the researchers resorted to the quantitative method encompassing questionnaire-based inquiry and classroom observation. The findings state that the faculty teachers fully support the development and implementation of multilingual education claiming that it is helpful for the students' future career. Moreover, the researchers argue that magazines, newspapers, TV, and posters are frequently utilized in the process of teaching in multilingual classrooms and of paramount importance for the students' effective communication and interaction ([Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2012](#)).

This kind of research is significant in the frame of multilingual education South-East European University as well as analyzing teachers' perception of multilingual education. However, the given research lacks detailed theory and needs deeper analysis with more meaningful and significant queries or probably the researchers are limited with the interpretation of research results in this study.

Recommendations for Kazakhstan

Based on the aforementioned cases on multilingual education considering five successful states that have the best theory and practice, we could conclude some implications of multilingual education in the context of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan may try to follow the models of international cases due to that they have a great practice in it. Provided that at the same time we should also remember that in all the cases, which were introduced above more than a hundred and some countries have around 30 and 40 years of experience in multilingual education. For example, Finland introduced multilingual education in 1987 and Luxembourg in 1912, The Netherlands in 1997, and Spain (The Basque Republic) in 1982 ([Irsaliyev et al., 2017](#)).

Kazakhstan is in its early stage of integrating multilingual education having introduced it in 2004 and started to implement in 2008. Thus, the country is encountering several considerable problems in introducing multilingualism, like the preparation of the teaching staff, redesign of study programs, provision of teaching resources and tools as well as supporting the learners, and teachers with applicable and required knowledge and equipment. By analyzing the international models of multilingual education, one could argue that they are the best and examined one that can strongly contribute to the development of multilingual education in Kazakhstan. The experienced countries are well-developed and in the case of Kazakhstan, we should also brood about the social-cultural, economic, and political interventions that may have a great impact on it.

Kazakhstan can gain necessary insights and practical implications based on the international experience to adapt the process of developing multilingual education. It covers almost all the needs in this sphere starting from the model of multilingual education to the teacher preparation. Considering the whole process of multilingual education, it is of high

importance to prioritize the key features of teaching staff preparation that contributes to the rapid development of multilingual education area.

Let us consider the key features of teaching staff preparation in multilingual education in Finland, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, and Switzerland. First of all, the significance of usage and training the CLIL method is necessary from the teachers' perspective. Such trainings on specific direction for teacher preparations give opportunities for acquiring different kinds of teaching methods and ideas, competences, as well as language course attendance for teachers. Furthermore, it cannot be limited only to the language learning; it also expands to the participation various teacher training courses, different online courses, the development of content knowledge, CLIL methodology, and cognitive skills (Hillyard, 2011).

Another contribution of CLIL is *"experience with teaching content matter through more than one language is bringing new insights into improving general education programmes"* (Baetens-Beardsmore, 2001). Teaching through CLIL method implies teaching content subject material via foreign language. Sometimes, it is also available that content subject teacher and foreign language teacher may work together by learning mutually and supporting each other (Vázquez & Ellison, 2018). Using these features, it will be easier to provide with multilingual teaching staff in several universities in a multilingual area. One of the essential recommendations is the facilitation and support of multilingual teachers, their professional development, and the enhancement of motivation for both teachers as well as students. To develop it further, it is also necessary to upgrade the proficiency of three languages of educational leaders. The expenditure per student and salary for teachers in Nordic countries are very different in comparison with Kazakhstan, which needs consideration too (Irsaliyev et al., 2017).

Multilingual education in Kazakhstan

State policy. The initiative of what the head of the state has entitled *"The Trinity of languages"* in Kazakhstan was introduced in 2004. After 2 years in 2006, during the 12th session of the Assembly of the people of Kazakhstan, the President of the country emphasized the significance of the knowledge of three languages, which is essential for the country's future. Along with this, the next step of implementing trilingual education was proposed in 2007 in the message of the President *"New Kazakhstan in a new world"* that involved the attraction of teaching staff from abroad and gradual implementation of trilingual education started (Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to the people of Kazakhstan, 2007).

In 2014 in the *"Kazakhstani way-2050"* declaration, the leader of the country pointed out the necessity of the knowledge of three languages for the school leavers (Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev to the nation, 2014).

Based on the “Trinity of Languages” project, the “State Program of functioning and development of languages for 2011–2020” ([Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan №110, n.d.](#)) is being carried out in three stages. The *first stage* starts from 2011 to 2013 and is dedicated to the usage of language development of measures to improve the regulatory and methodological basis. The *second stage* from 2014 to 2016 is devoted to the introduction and application of technologies, language teaching methods, language diversity safety, and practical implementations. The *third stage* from 2017 to 2020 witnesses the maintenance of another language usage, the necessity for the use of state language in public life, and the absorption of the demand for the quality and the validity of the monitoring system results (State Program of functioning and development of languages for 2011–2020). According to the aims of the “State Program 2011–2020” of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 95% of the population should speak Kazakh, 90% – Russian language, and 20% – English language ([Toktamysova, 2012](#)).

At present, the new generation of Kazakhstan is fully being integrated and influenced by multilingual education, because it is now being implemented and added to the curriculum of HEIs.

Experimental schools in Kazakhstan in multilingual education. Since 2007–2008, the multilingual education started by the initiative of the Kazakhstani Ministry of Education and Science ([Kulsariyeva, Iskakova, & Tajieva, 2017](#)). First of all, the implementation of multilingual education in three languages in the country began in three experimental bases including 33 “Daryn” pilot schools 20 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and 30 Bilim Innovation Lyceums (BIL) of all educational levels in pilot mode. Both NIS and BIL use the strong model of trilingual education while implementing three languages as instruction languages ([Irsaliyev et al., 2017](#), p. 135).

Strong model of multilingual education can be divided into three: language immersion for schoolchildren where they study in two languages including early, medium, and late immersion, which depends on the grades and ages of students. Second is the two-way immersion that means the equal study of the speakers of first and second languages in the same classroom. The third one is dedicated to the traditional bilingual education in those countries, which are officially regarded as multilingual (Luxemburg and Singapore). It usually occurs in the international schools where one of the language instructions is English ([Björklund et al., 2011](#) cited in [Irsaliyev et al., 2017](#)). These schools presented the study process in Kazakh, Russian, and English embracing the STEM subjects trained in English ([Kulsariyeva et al., 2017](#)).

NIS and BIL have their system of integrating the languages of instruction from the definite period of time, for example, BIL adopt lately Kazakh language from the 9th grade, whereas NIS provide their learners with English language for language instruction and BIL start

using English language instruction only after the language preparation (Irsaliyev et al., 2017). NIS and BIL schools are considered to be piloting schools of multilingual education. In 2019, the implementation of trilingual education will start in the other public and mainstream schools based on the experience of the aforementioned piloting schools (Irsaliyev et al., 2017).

NIS prepares their learners for 4 years extensively for instruction in English (Table 3), whereas, in BIL, they began to teach only after 4 months of intensive language training (Irsaliyev et al., 2017).

As illustrated in Figure 3, the model of trilingual education in NIS keeps the early immersion of the first language until grade 12. Native speakers, implementing bilingual team teaching, are carrying out teaching in this type of schools. In teaching English, they provide the learners with 4-year extensive language training and therefore by the end of school completion they are to possess C1 level of English. Furthermore, the learners are encouraged to be engaged in extracurricular activities in English language (Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 137).

Table 3. The amount of academic load of language subjects at schools

Schools	Week load (hr)	Expected level of L2	Expected level of L3
Nazarbayev Intellectual school (NIS)	4–5	C1	C1
Bilim Innovation Lyceums (BIL)	4–5	B2 and C1	B2
Mainstream schools	2–3	B1	B1

Note. Source: Irsaliyev et al. (2017).

Figure 3. Model of trilingual education in NIS with time allocation for each language (source: Irsaliyev et al., 2017)

As NIS and BIL schools are regarded as piloting, they have different kinds of multilingual education development strategies and models, grading systems, and various time allocations for integrating all three languages. They are even facilitated by the different curricula. Those hopefully will show the right procedure and results and contribute to choose which pilot mode to apply to the other mainstream schools (Sagyndykova, Svinarchuk, & Kubrina, 2017).

Multilingual education in Kazakhstani HEI

There are three main bases of State Policy in the field of Higher Education in Kazakhstan (2017) the *Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan* (RK), the “*Law on Education*,” and “*State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020*,” accordingly, higher education is open to those who have finished general secondary, technical, and vocational education or continuing education.

“*Law on Education*,” first launched in 1999, is the core and primary law ensuring a general framework for HEIs in Kazakhstan to designate its strategy for development. In addition, this law attempts to shape a new national model for the country’s educational system and it presents principles of the State Policy in the field of particularly higher education.

The Higher Education World Declaration in 21st century in accordance with UNESCO (1998) indicates the key point of integrating and developing multilingual education in HEIs such as “*the practice of multilingualism, teaching staff and students exchange program should be an integral part of all higher education systems*” (Article 15) cited in Kulsariyeva et al. (2017). Multilingual learning program provides the foundation of new models of education making the language culture the main foci. At present, the actions toward the implementation of that new education model in Kazakhstani higher education are being penetrated. This causes also the transformation of educational regulations and the arrangement of several departments in the universities, which are being implemented where polylingual teaching provides education using three languages (Toktamysova, 2012).

There are 125 HEIs in Kazakhstan. Among these, 54 belong to private ones and the other 16 are corporatized, 1 international, 31 non-civil, 9 national, and 1 autonomous (Nazarbayev University; Higher education in Kazakhstan).

Sagyndykova et al. (2017) provide a detailed statistics of the multilingual education development and describes it starting from 2012 to 2013 academic year 32 HEIs in Kazakhstan opened specific departments on multilingual education where the lessons are being conducted through English. In 2015–2016, the scope of those specific departments widened in 42 out of those 125 HEIs in the framework of trilingual education: 6 of them are national HEIs, 26 – state HEIs, 1 – international HEI, 7 – joint stock company HEIs,

and 2 – private HEIs (Sagyndykova et al., 2017). They point out that in 2015–2016, the number of multilingual groups increased to 2,393 in which 18,006 people are studying: 16,121 students are studying in bachelor degree, 1,662 in post-graduate education, and 223 in graduate education (Sagyndykova et al., 2017).

The teaching staff in multilingual education consists of 2,121 teachers who conduct lessons in English (Sagyndykova et al., 2017). In 17 universities, training in three languages began since 2012. They conduct teacher preparation in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Information and Communication Technologies in English as a medium of instruction. Since 2016, there is a transformation to the model of multilingual education “50:20:30” which means (50% of subjects are conducted in the first language, 20% in the second language, and 30% in the third one; Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 139).

Having researched the aforementioned details of multilingual education development in Kazakhstani HEIs, it is noticeable that trilingual education is rapidly advancing. Almost one third of Kazakhstani HEIs are implementing and penetrating multilingual education, which shows the significance and relevance of multilingual setting development on the national scope. Furthermore, according to Toktamysova (2012), the multilingual education implemented in Kazakhstani higher education is the unique program that embraces the conduction of training parallel and simultaneously in three languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English). She also emphasizes that all the works connected to the formation of multilingual personality in the roles of multilingual teachers and different kinds of teacher training and preparations involving multilingual education are accomplished and supported by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES of RK; Toktamysova, 2012).

The rapid development of multilingual education in Kazakhstani HEIs may cause some challenges as well. As it is regarded to be a new model, educational institutions face the lack of teaching materials and staff in the English language. For example, Kazakhstani scholars, Sagyndykova et al. (2017) indicate that the whole elaboration and organization of teaching materials in Kazakhstani higher education system are prepared by the universities. Special teaching staffs who conduct lessons in multilingual groups on a specific area, for example, Chemistry and Biology in Kazakh or Russian languages, usually fulfill the procedure of the teaching materials preparation. The new materials and manuals, online courses, dictionaries in three languages, and glossaries elaborated in Kazakh or Russian are translated and reviewed into English by the teachers of English in the English language department (Sagyndykova et al., 2017). It means that the most significant challenges in multilingual education in Kazakhstani HEIs are the lack of teaching staff with English knowledge proficiency. Despite the paucity of teachers with the proficiency of three languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English) all around Kazakhstan, professors invited from abroad also work in Kazakhstani HEIs mainly in the capital city and other megacities.

The development of multilingual education started in HEIs and there are two basic universities, such as Karaganda State University (KarSU) situated in the central part of the country and Nazarbayev University (NU) in the capital city Astana that are considered the bases of multilingual education. KarSU is contributing for the better development of a “Framework of multilingual education development in Kazakhstan” since 2008. The given framework involves all the necessary documents and teaching resources, scientific, and methodological supports as well as their implementation stages (Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 139).

According to Irsaliyev et al. (2017), one model of trilingual education in Kazakhstan is devoted to KarSU (Figure 4) and a different for the other universities (Figure 5) where multilingual education is being developed and expanded. In Kazakhstani higher education, the undergraduate (bachelor) education takes 4 years of study; thus, there are a total of eight semesters to fulfill for the students.

The first one (Figure 4) belongs to Karaganda state university, which establishes the framework for multilingual education development in Kazakhstan and the latter one is dedicated to other universities where multilingual education is developing. As it is delineated in the diagram while integrating trilingual education, the KarSU allocates several credits on English as a language of instruction only starting from the second semester along with English as a subject. It continues until the seventh semester, so it means that the students study English as a subject from the first semester and starting from the second semester they have the other subjects with English language instruction.

Figure 4. Model of trilingual education in KarSU academic load (credit numbers; source: Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 140)

Figure 5. Model of trilingual education in universities (average) academic load (credit numbers; source: Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 141)

Implementation of English as a language of instruction in the second semester allows the students to acquire English language proficiency, even though sometimes it cannot be sufficient and in the seventh semester they wholly transfer to the English language instruction model. As it is illustrated in the diagram, the levels of English language as a subject and English as a language of instruction change every semester. In the eighth semester, students develop their teaching practices in schools; thus, they have no classes (Irsaliyev et al., 2017, p. 141).

In the trilingual education model of other universities, as illustrated in Figure 5, they strive to keep it somehow altogether by allocating credits both for English as a subject and for subjects with English as a language of instruction. Implementation of English as a language of instruction starting both from the first semester may lead to the deterioration of students' internalization on those specific subjects due to the lack of language proficiency of students. At the same time, it gives the advantage to provide with the credits for English as a subject until the end of their graduation. That contributes the students to support and enhance their knowledge of the language that will lead to better subject cognitions. Even though this kind of model can be a plus factor for trilingual education integration to make students study, for example, Biology, Chemistry, etc., from the beginning in English, it can cause problems concerning the students' understanding of the subject in English due to the lack of students' English language competence.

Conclusions

We present in this paper the understanding of the concept "multilingualism" and "multilingual education" with different approaches. We have analyzed various kinds of definitions of the given concept as well as decomposing multilingual education systems in different contexts including European nations and the case of Kazakhstan. Multilingualism policies are describing the stages of multilingual education settings development in countries. This article reveals very significant multilingual cases and different systems in multilingual education providing useful information in terms of different ways and models of developing multilingualism. It discovers that almost all multilingual cases are implementing diverse multilingual education both at compulsory schools and HEIs paying more attention to the right time allocation for language learning and CLIL method of teaching. We found out that several European countries, such as Finland, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Luxembourg, etc., that have a successful experience in practicing and administering multilingual education. It is obvious from the aforementioned models of multilingual settings that these nations are mainly focusing on developing multilingualism mostly by providing the educational institutions with the right and possible amount of time allocation for the language-learning dimensions. Moreover, they underline the significance of the teacher training and additional training courses for the teaching staff to make the teaching staff be able to teach in multilingual settings.

Multilingualism is a solid experience of European countries but Kazakhstan has chosen its own way of developing trilingualism – multilingualism. Such development and intervention of multilingual education may serve as an implication for the multilingual education system of Kazakhstan and as the best practices for usage. Notwithstanding the best experiences of aforementioned European multilingual countries, the case of Kazakhstan in this field remains heterogeneous because of cultural diversity and various language backgrounds but nevertheless we opine that Kazakhstan can somehow benefit from these approaches too. Although with the thoroughly elaborated policy, the education system encounters a variety of issues: lack of teaching staff, lack of teaching resources, and aids. However, time by time with the development of teaching resources, the teaching environment is getting more favorable for multilingual education. Any reform requires an ongoing long time to achieve results. It is advisable to continuously follow and measure its development and implement changes whenever a correction would be needed.

On the whole, due to a great variety of multilingualism and multilingual education development models, this paper sets a number of insights for the practitioners, and researchers in the frame of comparing best experiences in the field of multilingualism in different contexts may serve as the possible alternative for the case of Kazakhstan in developing multilingual education.

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Ethics

Eötvös Loránd University approved the study. The number of research ethics approval is 2019/204. All subjects were informed about the study and all provided informed consent.

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