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Issue VII, November 2024

e-ISSN 2707-9481

ISBN 978-601-80473-3-6

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<https://doi.org/10.31643/2024.03>

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## **Language as a mirror of the people**

**Abstract:** This article explores the connection between language and culture, arguing that language is indeed a mirror of the people. By analyzing linguistic features and expressions, we uncover the essence of society, its history, and values. Viewing language as a reflection of collective experience, we understand that it not only conveys information but also expresses identity and cultural heritage. Language serves as a reflection of a society's culture, values, and collective identity. In this article, we endeavor to explore the challenges encountered by educators in the classroom while instructing a foreign language. Through comprehensive examination and analysis, we aim to identify the various hurdles that teachers confront in this endeavor. By delving into factors such as linguistic differences, cultural barriers, student engagement levels, and resource limitations, we seek to shed light on the multifaceted nature of these obstacles. Additionally, we strive to provide insights and potential strategies for overcoming these challenges, thereby facilitating more effective foreign language instruction in educational settings.

**Keywords:** mirror, people, linguistics, identity, students, interculture.

### **Introduction**

Language serves as a fundamental medium for communication, profoundly influencing how individuals perceive and interpret their surroundings. The longstanding debate over whether languages influence cognitive processes has captivated scholars and intellectuals for generations. Would our thought patterns be uniform if we all shared the same language? This article seeks to explore this intricate topic, utilizing examples, specifics, and personal anecdotes derived from experiences with English and the author's native tongue. In the past few decades, the central position of teachers ensuring the quality of education has become increasingly acknowledged internationally and language plays a key role in education (Zharylkassyn, 2023).

Starting with linguistic relativity, commonly referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it suggests that the structure and lexicon of a language can influence how its speakers perceive and understand the world. Various languages encode unique cultural subtleties and viewpoints, thereby shaping the cognitive processes of their speakers. For example, the Inuit community possesses numerous terms for snow, reflecting their deep relationship with the environment. This linguistic diversity enables a more nuanced comprehension of their surroundings, a depth of understanding that might be absent in languages with more restricted vocabulary.

Moreover, languages can shape thought patterns by influencing how individuals express concepts and emotions. For example, some languages, like Japanese, have elaborate systems of honorifics that convey social hierarchies and respect. This linguistic feature not only reflects cultural values but also encourages individuals to think in terms of social relationships and hierarchy. In contrast, languages like English may prioritize directness and individualism, influencing thought processes towards clarity and independence.

Personal experiences with English and my native language further highlight the idea that linguistic diversity promotes diversity in cognitive structures. Being multilingual, I have noticed subtle differences in the way I express emotions in English compared to my native language. The English language, with its rich vocabulary for describing emotions, often facilitates more detailed and explicit expression of feelings. On the other hand, my native language may rely on context and nonverbal cues to promote a different approach to expressing emotions. However, the question of whether thinking would be uniform if we all spoke the same language is not a straightforward one. While language undeniably shapes thought, it is not the sole determinant. Cultural, social, and individual factors also contribute significantly to cognitive processes. Even within a single language, diverse dialects and regional variations can lead to distinct thought patterns. A dialect is a type of language that is used as a means of communication between people connected by the same territory. Scientists and linguists are still arguing whether there are dialects in Kazakhstan. We will not get involved in this dispute, but we note that there are words among southerners that northern Kazakhs never use. For instance, an English speaker from the southern United States may have a different linguistic and cultural perspective compared to a speaker from the northern region.

The relationship between language and thought is intricate and multifaceted. Languages, with their unique structures and vocabularies, undoubtedly influence the way individuals perceive and interpret the world. However, the idea that a universal language would homogenize thought oversimplifies the intricate interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors. The diversity of languages enriches human cognition, offering unique lenses through which we view our surroundings. The question of whether languages help would the way we think is a dynamic and ongoing exploration, transcending the boundaries of linguistic and cognitive studies. In the Education sector, there are several obstacles faced by non-native speaker students who learn a foreign language. Although, they currently have got their first language to help them learn a foreign language such as English (Songbatumis, 2017).

There is a need to link theoretical reasoning with my own practice. As an English teacher at school faces various challenges, ranging from student engagement to administrative pressures. One difficulty is addressing diverse learning styles within a single classroom, requiring tailored approaches to cater to individual needs. Grappling with limited time poses another hurdle, as educators strive to cover a comprehensive curriculum while ensuring thorough understanding. Additionally, managing classroom behavior and fostering a positive learning environment can be demanding, impacting both teacher and student morale. The dynamic nature of the educational environment, marked by constant changes and the integration of technology, underscores the need for ongoing adaptation. Moreover, external influences such as standardized testing requirements often overshadow the holistic learning journey. English teachers find themselves navigating a delicate balance between meeting assessment demands, adhering to curriculum standards, and fostering a genuine passion for literature among their students. This article explores the challenges faced by English educators in maintaining this equilibrium, highlighting the complexities involved in providing a comprehensive and enriching learning experience amidst evolving educational paradigms and external pressures (Sokip, 2020).

#### **Research question:**

What specific insights did the survey reveal regarding the obstacles faced by teachers both inside and outside the classroom, as well as the challenges encountered by students in learning a foreign language?

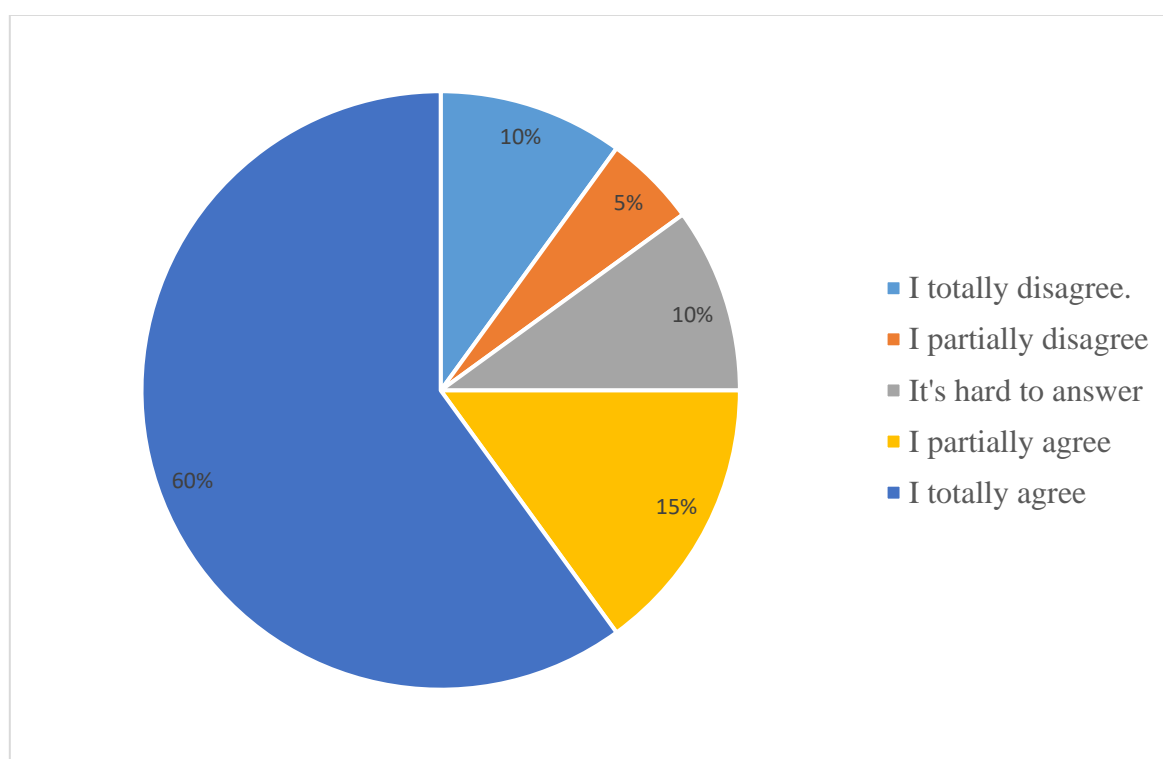
#### **Research procedure**

In this article the challenges faced by teachers and students when teaching and learning a foreign language, particularly English. Conducting an online survey to gather teachers' opinions is a practical approach to understanding these challenges. English language teachers from public schools in Almaty (Kazakhstan) were recruited to participate in the survey.

#### **Research results and discussions**

The use of new information technologies in language classrooms can indeed serve as a powerful tool for increasing student interest and overcoming language barriers. Developing a variety of skills such as reading, spelling, speaking and listening through these technologies demonstrates a holistic approach to

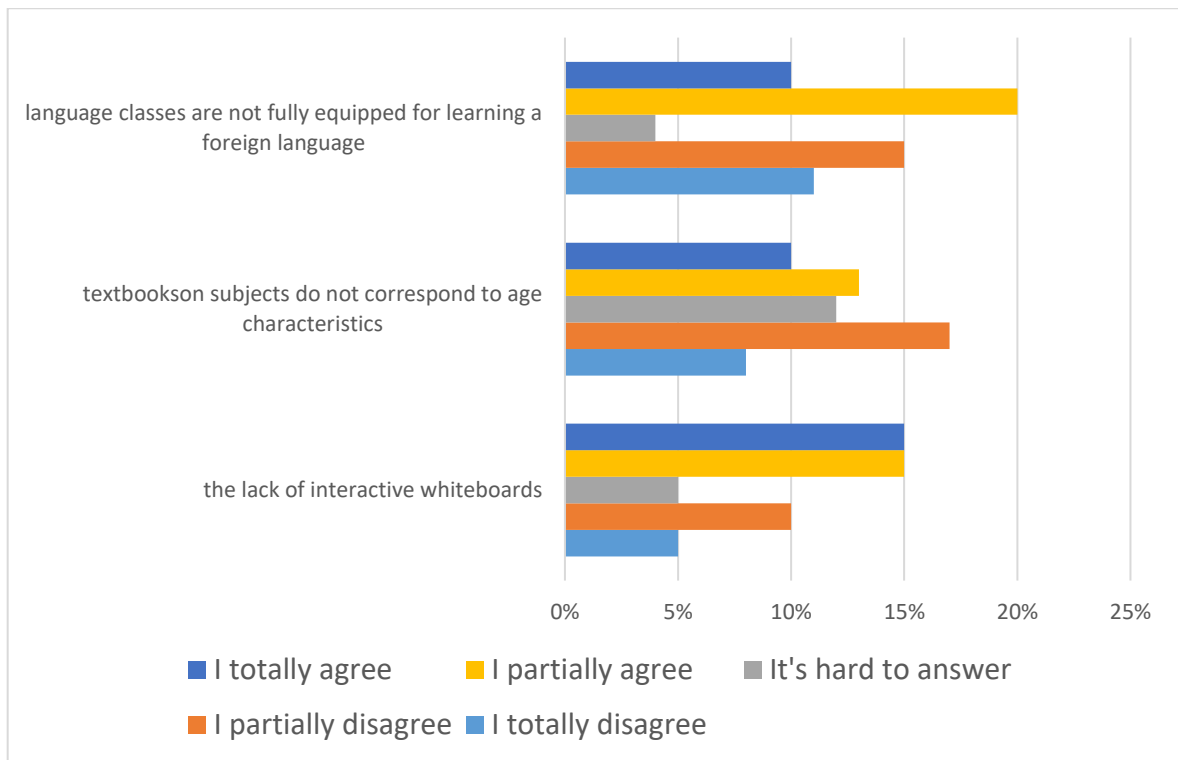
language learning that meets a variety of learning needs (Liton, 2016). In the segment focusing on challenges encountered by teachers beyond the classroom, we aimed to pinpoint the obstacles they confront. We enumerated several difficulties encountered by students outside formal instructional settings, such as the lack of interactive whiteboards, subject-specific textbooks, and their incongruence with age-appropriate characteristics. In the section addressing hurdles, our objective was to ascertain the difficulties faced by students within the classroom environment. Via online inquiries, we gauged teachers' viewpoints regarding students, finding that: a) Kazakh schoolchildren's timidity emerges as the primary hindrance to speech skill development; b) integrating ICT into the classroom should facilitate fostering students' autonomy tailored to their physiological, intellectual, and psychological attributes; c) the utilization of novel technologies in practical applications introduces a fresh cognitive engagement avenue for students, leading to the discovery of new knowledge. In the questionnaire's opening section, it became evident that teachers encounter notable difficulties within the classroom environment. These challenges revolve around fostering students' fundamental communication skills in English for real-world application, ensuring the regular availability of educational resources, and establishing appropriate benchmarks for learning objectives. (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Problems faced by teachers in the classroom

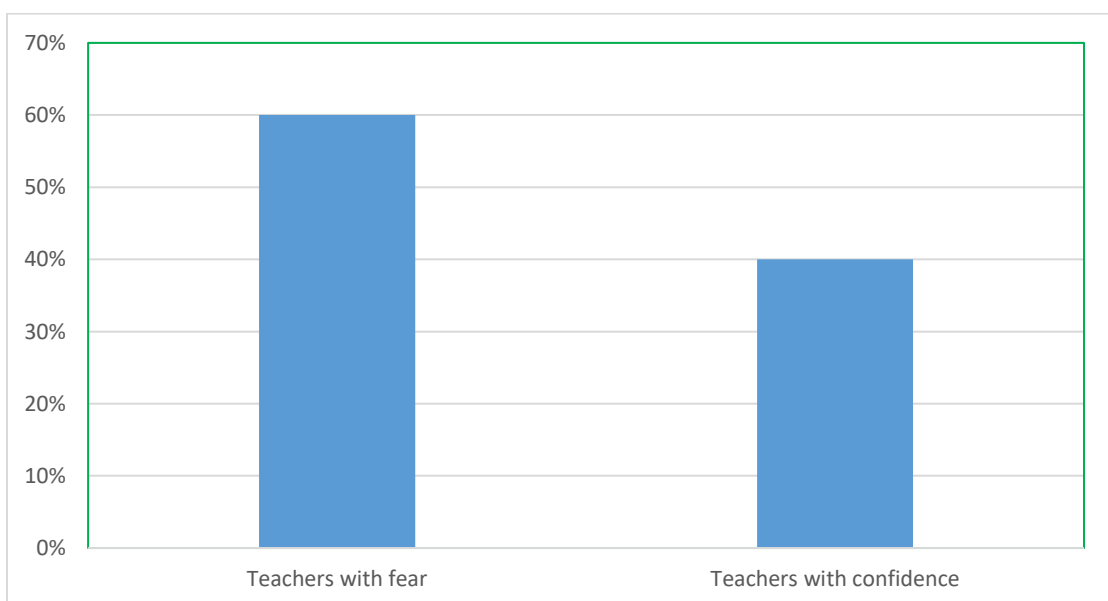
Most respondents (60%) stated their use of modern information technologies in class. This method is seen as effective in boosting student interest in English and breaking down language learning barriers. Employing diverse types of activities, whether individual, paired, group-based, or whole-class, is deemed a practical approach in achieving these objectives. Furthermore, the removal of obstacles encountered in foreign language instruction through effective methods is contingent upon the proficiency of the teacher (Fig. 1).

The findings from the second part of the questionnaire revealed that a majority of respondents (53%) identified several challenges encountered by teachers outside the classroom. These include the absence of interactive whiteboards, inadequacies in subject-specific textbooks aligning with age-appropriate characteristics, and inadequately equipped language classrooms for foreign language instruction. Within this segment of the survey, teachers also indicate their agreement or disagreement with the data collected during interviews with students (Fig. 2.)



**Fig. 2.** Problems faced by teachers outside the classroom

In the third phase of the survey, a significant majority of participants, comprising 60% of the respondents, emphasized several key challenges encountered by teachers. Specifically, they identified student shyness, characterized by a reluctance to actively engage in classroom activities or participate in discussions. Additionally, teachers expressed concern over students' self-doubt, indicating a lack of confidence in their own abilities to grasp and apply the lesson material effectively. Furthermore, a prevalent issue noted by respondents was the insufficient interest displayed by students towards the lesson topics, hindering their motivation to fully immerse themselves in the learning process. These findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by teachers in fostering an engaging and conducive learning environment for their students (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3.** Problems faced by teachers are shyness, self-doubt and lack of sufficient interest in the topic of the lesson

The analysis of the questionnaire revealed several barriers in English language teaching. Firstly, shyness emerges as a significant obstacle. Many students, especially beginners, harbor apprehensions about their ability to speak the language correctly, leading to feelings of insecurity and shyness. Despite completing homework assignments, some students may still feel uncomfortable interacting with their peers, hampering their fluency development in English. Secondly, the lack of time presents another major hurdle. Even with well-structured and effective lessons, students need sufficient time to apply and practice what they've learned. Without regular practice, retention of lesson content diminishes rapidly. Thus, allocating adequate time for students to develop their English language skills is crucial for their progress.

Roth (2015) discussed the concept of representation, which links meaning and language to culture through reflective, intentional, and constructive approaches. This perspective highlights the ways in which language reflects and constructs cultural norms, values, and beliefs, thus serving as a mirror of the people in a given society. Yeshurun et al. (2017) found that brain responses to the same event tend to cluster among people who share the same perspective. This finding suggests that language as a form of communication not only reflects individual beliefs, but also has the potential to shape shared perspectives and cognitive responses within a community.

As a result, we would like to note that there are many obstacles in teaching a foreign language, from technical problems to stimulating the student. Our research has shown that motivation is necessary to overcome most of the difficulties in learning a foreign language. In addition, the use of ICT in teaching foreign languages plays an important role. Student shyness, lack of time, textbooks with difficult tasks, etc. - it was found that such problems have a negative impact on the level of English proficiency the language of the student. In solving these problems, it was found that barriers are eliminated only when teaching methods languages gain the interest of students by using effective new technologies in language teaching. The results of this study will be of great help to English language teachers in all secondary schools. In addition, the use of the proposed barriers to teaching English in this study may help students become better proficient in English in the future. In general, in order to overcome obstacles faced by students when teaching them English.

## **Conclusions**

To sum up, a teacher must constantly improve his professional skills. Moreover, as we have seen in the course of our research, it is the teacher who must overcome the negative habits inherent in any student when learning a language. Today, as we have already mentioned, we have highlighted some elements of removing barriers that we face when teaching a foreign language. However, this research will continue in the future, completely removing barriers to teaching English and demonstrating effective work. This is due to the fact that barriers to learning English are one of the most pressing problems in the direction of high-quality learning of this language. Based on the data provided during the conducted research, it became clear that it is necessary to eliminate barriers in teaching English, and during such elimination it is necessary to work intensively, always demonstrating the skill of the teacher.

### ***Research recommendation***

Although the research findings discussed above provide valuable insights into the relationship between language and culture, there are still gaps in knowledge that require further research. Future research should focus on exploring how language serves as a mirror of different cultural perspectives and how it influences the construction of shared meanings and beliefs in diverse communities.

**CRedit author statement:** **Zh. Dzhambulova:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation. **A. Serik:** Supervision, Data curation, Writing draft preparation. **A. Orynbayeva:** Visualization, Investigation. **D. Rzabayeva:** Reviewing and Editing.

**Acknowledgement.** This study was supported by the Abai National Pedagogical University in Almaty, in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Authors would like to thank for the reviewer comments to improve the article quality.

**Cite this article:** Dzhambulova, Zh., Serik, A., Orynbayeva, A., Rzabayeva, D. (2024). Language as a mirror of the people. *Challenges of Science*. Issue VII, pp. 20-25. <https://doi.org/10.31643/2024.03>

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