

Reasons Why Kyrgyz Students Prefer Russian as the Language of Instruction in Universities: Student Views

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Received: August 29, 2018 Accepted: January 6, 2019 Online Published: February 25, 2019

doi:10.5539/jel.v8n2p77 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v8n2p77>

Abstract

This study aimed to determine the reasons why university students in Kyrgyzstan prefer Russian as the language of instruction. Twenty university students were selected as the study group. While the semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool of the study designed in the phenomenology design, the content analysis technique was used as the data analysis technique. The data were collected from the students with a voice recorder and a notebook. The research has revealed that the most effective reason why the university students in Kyrgyzstan prefer Russian as the language of education is their concern for finding jobs in the future and the inadequacy of the Kyrgyz sources in scientific research. Among the reasons why students prefer Russian as the language of instruction, the least effective one is foreign language learning. The results were discussed in the context of the relevant literature and suggestions thought to serve to solve the problem were put forth.

Keywords: Kyrgyz, Russian, university, student, language of instruction

1. Introduction

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, nationalization movements began in the countries that gained independence. Work was initiated in the areas such as national economy, national education and national media. However, besides all these efforts, the problem of mother tongue emerged along with independence. This is because, for decades, Russia had been the dominant language in every area in all the countries in the Soviet Union. All educational materials, laws and documents, in short, the whole accumulation of the country had been built in Russian. Therefore, Turkic states which separated from the USSR after independence encountered great difficulties such as having multiple languages and especially the official superiority of Russian (Masdye, 2011, p. 64).

Kyrgyzstan, which is one of the countries separated from the USSR, also had its share of these difficulties. Immediately after independence, Kyrgyz was accepted as the national language to achieve nationalization. Although the acceptance of Kyrgyz as a national language was seen as an important step towards nationalization, it also brought about big problems. For example, the absence of an important Kyrgyz work in the education brought about the problem of reorganization of the education system from the beginning (Jumakulova, 2009, p. 9).

Russian language was no more a national language; but it was accepted as the official language (Savichev, 2014, p. 222). Accordingly, Russian became the main language in Kyrgyzstan's international relations (Nur uulu, 2009, p. 212; Kulichenko, 2010, p. 310; Murzakulova & Dyatlenko, 2012, p. 14). According to the data from Kyrgyz National Statistical Institute (KIRTAG, 2017), today 356,637 Russian people live in Kyrgyzstan. Compared to the 1999 data, this figure decreased almost by half (NSK KR, 2018). Despite the decline of the Russian population, however, Russian continued to be the dominant language throughout the country, especially in cities and business life. One of the most important reasons for this was the fact that Russian was still the official language. This gives the Russian language legitimacy among Kyrgyz intellectuals and scientists in the country. Russian is widely used in business, economics and political circles (Kulichenko, 2010, p. 311).

While people who speak Russian are described as intellectual or literate in society, those who do not speak Russian are not accepted as intellectuals, no matter how educated they are. The Russian language unavoidably became the language of the elite, the language of the science and the urban language. The status of Russian as an

indicator of being a well-educated modern person in the Kyrgyz society was inherited from the USSR (Ibragimova, 2008, p. 69). For, in the era of the Soviet Union, the Russian language was accepted as the language of science and civilization in the entire Soviet geography.

This study is on the increasing preference of the Russian language as the language of instruction by Kyrgyz students in Kyrgyzstan. The question ‘What are the reasons why university students in Kyrgyzstan prefer Russian as their language of instruction?’ was determined as the main problem of the study. It is believed that the research will contribute to the ongoing mother tongue development activities in Kyrgyzstan and will inspire other Turkic States in Central Asia. In addition, because there is no such work conducted on this subject before, this study also tries to fill this gap.

In this study, where the semi-structured interview form was used, the reason why students prefer Russian as the language of instruction was tried to be determined by the phenomenology pattern. The data obtained were analyzed by content analysis and written in the findings section. In the conclusion section, the data in the findings section are discussed and interpreted.

1.1 Place of Russian in Education

The fact that the vast majority of scientific terms and sources are in Russian unavoidably brought Russian language to the dominant position in the language of instruction. Therefore, the children of the families living in rural areas have to migrate to cities to study in universities giving education in Russian and to learn Russian and find a good job. This leads to a great deal of difficulties for families with limited financial means. Children with poor parents have to stay with their relatives in cities or work.

According to UNICEF’s 2013–2014 data on the number of students according to the language of instruction in higher education, the number of students receiving Kyrgyz education was 55.773 whereas those receiving Russian education was 162.293. Again, according to UNICEF’s (2014) data, while 184.091 of the students studying in higher education during these dates were Kyrgyz, the number of Russian students studying in higher education was only 15.581. This means that more than 70% of Kyrgyz students are studying in Russian language in higher education (Savichev, 2014, p. 224). Although the Kyrgyz language should be the dominant language of instruction according to the figures, it is surprising that the language of instruction is mostly Russian. This shows how little Kyrgyz is influential in higher education when compared to Russian.

While young people who know only Kyrgyz are restricted to only some parts of Kyrgyzstan, there are no borders for those who know Russian and the doors of all the countries which were separated from the USSR are opened to them. All the technical information that can be reached in any part of the education life is in Russian. Russian has been like a window that opens to the outside world up until now. This situation has increased the desire of young people to learn Russian and study in universities giving education in Russian. Today in Kyrgyzstan, almost all of the universities in cities, especially in the capital city, provide education in Russian. Some of the young people from rural areas who do not speak Russian can learn Russian in their 4–5 years of university life, whereas some cannot learn Russian at a good level. However, the common point of these young people is that when they start university they cannot succeed in the classes because of their inadequate knowledge of the Russian language. In other words, when they finish university, some learn only Russian while others neither learn language nor obtain adequate professional knowledge (Ibragimova, 2008, p. 70).

Today, there are branches of 6 Russian universities within the borders of Kyrgyzstan. A total of 3185 students are enrolled in these universities. Among the Turkic Republics, Kyrgyzstan ranks second after Kazakhstan in terms of number of Russian universities and students receiving Russian education (Vladimirovich, 2010, p. 58). In a survey conducted in 2007, parents in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were asked ‘‘Would you like your child to study abroad, if yes, in which country?’’ The results are as follows (Vladimirovich, 2010, p. 61):

Table 1. Statistical information on whether or not parents want their children to study abroad in 2007 (percentage of the total population)

	Russia	Europe	United States	Total
Kazakhstan	18	17	14	49
Kyrgyzstan	32	17	14	63
Tajikistan	37	12	14	63

As can be seen, 63% of Kyrgyzstan’s population wants their children to study abroad. 32% of the parents want them to study in Russia. Possibly, the majority of the remaining 37% of the population want their children to

study at public universities giving education in foreign language, in particular Russian. This situation reveals the extent of the danger.

1.2 Purpose of Research

The research aims to determine the reasons why the Kyrgyz students from rural areas prefer Russian as the language of instruction in universities. Based on the findings obtained from the research, some suggestions will be put forth for the development of the Kyrgyz departments. In this direction, on the basis of the data collected with the semi-structured interview form, answers to the following questions were sought.

- 1) Does the educational quality have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 2) Does the Fact that Russian is the Official Language have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 3) Does concern about future have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 4) Do the attitudes of the academicians have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 5) Does desire to learn a foreign language have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 6) Does the popularity of Russian have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 7) Does community pressure have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?
- 8) Does the absence of Kyrgyz sources have an effect on the selection of departments giving education in Russian?

2. Method

The research used the phenomenological pattern of qualitative research patterns. Phenomenology is a kind of qualitative work that investigate the phenomena we have encountered in our lives but we do not have detailed knowledge about or we do not think much about (Aydin, 2015, p. 290). According to Bryman (2012, p. 30), the phenomenology method deals with how people perceive their external worlds. Due to its suitability for the purpose of the study, phenomenology was chosen as the method to determine the reasons why students prefer Russian as the language of instruction in universities.

2.1 Study Group

Purposive sampling technique from the non-random sampling methods was used in the determination of the study group. Purposive sampling technique is a method that enables in-depth research on information-rich cases depending on the purpose of the study (Buyukozturk et al., 2016, p. 90). In addition, according to Kelly (2016, p. 56), purposive sampling method is conducted by selecting people who have appropriate conditions for the purpose of research. In this respect, in order to be included in the study group, the participants had to receive their previous education in the Kyrgyz language, to come from rural areas and to be studying in the Russian language. A total of 42 students from different universities were reached and information was given to these students on the subject. Among them, twenty students were selected who seemed to have the most suitable conditions. Interviews were carried out in the fall semester of 2017–2018 education year with 4 female and 6 male students.

2.2 Data Collection Tool

The semi-structured interview technique, which is one of the interview techniques used as data collection technique in qualitative researches, was chosen as the data collection tool of this study. A semi-structured interview is similar to a structured interview; but it has the flexibility to change the order of the questions, and can collect richer data (Zacharias, 2012, p. 99; Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40). Firstly, a preliminary interview about the possible reasons why students prefer Russian departments at universities was held with 4 students receiving Russian education to determine the possible questions to be included in the interview form. A semi-structured interview form consisting of 10 questions in total was formed. The prepared semi-structured interview form was presented to the instructors of the Department of Educational Sciences of Kyrgyz-Turk Manas University in order to obtain expert opinions in terms of intelligibility and suitability. Since there was closeness in meaning between the two questions according to the opinions received from the experts and since it was thought that this would lead to confusion in meaning, we decided to take out one of these questions. There were 9 questions left. Along with these questions, alternative questions were prepared to ensure that the participants understand the

questions and to get more information from the participants. In addition, probe questions were prepared to get in-depth answers from the participants.

A pilot interview was held primarily to test the final version of the interview form. A recording device and a notebook were used during the interviews. Field notes are mostly used as a secondary data collection method in qualitative researches. Since the human brain is prone to forget quickly, important points need to be noted during the interview (Groenewald, 2004, p. 15). As a result of the pilot interview, it was determined that one of the questions produced unnecessary data and so, we decided to take it out. The remaining 8 questions in the interview form were understood as desired by the participants. In addition, the estimated duration of the interview was tried to be determined. It was concluded that 27 minutes was sufficient as the lower limit for the interview period. In order for the interview to become effective and productive, the questions were re-ordered to be from private to general.

Opinions were received from students participating in the study about how, when and where the interview should be conducted, and for each student, the most suitable time and the most suitable place, where they could express their opinions comfortably, was determined. In this suitable place and time, each student was interviewed separately. In order for the interview to be conducted in a chat environment, a place with no background noise was identified outside the university they studied in. With this, it was aimed to ensure that students respond more sincerely. After each interview with the students, the record was listened and notes were taken as soon as possible.

2.3 Data Analysis

With semi-structured interview form consisting of 8 questions, the data were collected from university students with the help of voice recorder and notebook. The collected data was listened to many times to analyze and converted into text. Each item was accepted as a heading and under these headings; common and frequently repeated answers were identified among the answers given by the students. Because of the large amount of data obtained, the content analysis technique, which is an analysis technique that systematically encodes common expressions that are frequent among the data (Larisa, 2001, p. 5), was used these common aspects were converted into tables. In order for Content Analysis to be performed, the frequency with which statements are expressed in the text is determined. Berg (2007, p. 243) stated that the usage frequency limit for expressions to be included in the content analysis in the text should be 20%.

Unlike quantitative research, there are no standardized and accepted tests for qualitative research on reliability and validity (Winter, 2000, p. 9). In ensuring the reliability and validity of qualitative research, a detailed description of the stages of how the research process was determined, how the sample was selected and how and why the data were collected is an important criterion (Karamustafaoglu, 2015, p. 228). According to Golafshani (2003, p. 599), the terms reliability and validity are usually tools of positivist tradition. Therefore, the fact that the researcher does not intervene in the research will increase the reliability of the research. Taking this as a starting point, when students were being interviewed, we avoided any intervention that would change their views and their views were conveyed without being manipulated.

3. Findings

Table 2. University students' views on the reasons why they prefer Russian language in education

Item	N	Effective	Slightly Effective	Not Effective at All	\bar{X}	%
Education quality	20	10	6	4	2.30	50
The Fact that Russian is the Official Language	20	17	-	3	2.70	85
Concern for the Future	20	20	-	-	3.00	100
Attitudes of Academicians	20	7	7	6	2.05	35
The Desire to Learn a Foreign Language	20	6	4	10	1.80	30
Its Popularity among the Public	20	12	4	4	2.40	60
Social Pressure	20	13	4	3	2.50	65
Lack of Sources	20	16	-	4	2.60	80

As seen in Table 2, the most important reason why students in Kyrgyzstan prefer Russian as the language of education in universities is found to be "concern for the future" ($\bar{X}=3.00$). All of the students think that the most influential factor in the selection of Russian as the language of instruction is "concern for the future". The least influential factor in the selection of Russian as the language of instruction is found to be "desire to learn a foreign language" ($\bar{X}=1.80$).

3.1 Findings Related to the 1st Sub-Problem of “Has Education Quality Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 3. Students’ views on the effect of the education quality on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
The fact that the academicians lecturing in Russian studied abroad	4	20
Incorrect or incomplete translation of books from Russian into Kyrgyz	6	30
The absence of some departments in the Kyrgyz language	4	20
The fact that most of the scientific terms are in Russian	4	20
No effect at all	4	20

Of the participants, 4 students (S2, S12, S17, S19) gave the example of the fact that the academicians lecturing in Russian studied abroad, 6 students (S3, S4, S6, S9, S10, S15) gave the example of incorrect or incomplete translation of books from Russian into Kyrgyz, 4 students (S2, S6, S9, S14) gave the example of lack of some departments in the Kyrgyz language, 4 students (S5, S7, S11, S13) gave the example of the fact that most of the scientific terms are in Russian whereas 4 students (S1, S8, S16, S20) stated that these factors were not influential.

3.2 Findings Related to the 2nd Sub-Problem of “Has the Fact that Russian is the Official Language Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 4. Students’ views on the effect of the fact that Russian is the official language on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
The fact that state authorities speak Russian	6	30
The fact that officials in public institutions speak Russian	8	40
The fact that official documents are requested in Russian	8	40
The fact that news on TV is presented in Russian	2	10
No effect at all	2	10

With a mean of 2.80 points, this factor ranks third among the factors effective on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in universities. While 9 participants thought that this factor was effective, only one of the participants said it had no effect. 6 students (S2, S7, S10, S11, S14, S19) gave the example of “The fact that state officials speak Russian”, 8 students (S2, S5, S7, S9) gave the example of “The fact that officials in official institutions speak Russian”, 8 students (S1, S2, S7, S9, S10, S13, S17, S20) gave the example of “The fact that official documents are requested in Russian”, 2 student (S2, S4) gave the example of “The fact that news on TV is presented in Russian” whereas 2 student (S3, S16) said it had no effect at all.

3.3 Findings Related to the 3rd Sub-Problem of “Has Concern for the Future Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 5. Students’ views on the effect of the concern for the future on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
Opportunity to find jobs in Russian-speaking countries	16	80
Opportunity to work in Russia	10	50
Opportunity to live and work in the capital Bishkek	10	50
Convenience in business trips	2	10
The fact that large firms in Kyrgyzstan demand Russian-speaking employees	4	20
No job opportunities in the villages	6	30
No effect at all	-	-

All of the participants said that this was the most effective reason for preferring Russian as the language of instruction in university. 16 students (S1, S2, S4, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20) gave the example of “Opportunity to find jobs in Russian-speaking countries”, 10 students (S1, S2, S3, S8, S10, S11, S13, S14, S15, S19) gave the example of “Opportunity to work in Russia”, 10 students (S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S11, S12, S13, S20) gave the example of “Opportunity to live and work in the capital Bishkek”, 2 student (S3, S17) gave the example of “Convenience in business trips”, 4 students (S6, S7, S9, S14) gave the example of “The fact that large firms in Kyrgyzstan demand Russian-speaking employees” whereas 6 students (S4, S5, S6, S11, S15, S18) gave the example of “No job opportunities in the villages”.

3.4 Findings Related to the 4th Sub-Problem of “Have the Attitudes of Academicians Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 6. Students’ views on the effect of the attitudes of academicians on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
Russian-speaking academicians grew up in the cities; they are more successful in communication	4	20
Kyrgyz-speaking academicians grew up in the villages; they are not successful in communication	2	10
Russian-speaking academicians have seen different countries; so, they are different	2	10
Russian-speaking academicians ensure that students participate in lessons	8	40
Russian-speaking academicians listen to the opinions of students	4	20
No effect at all	8	40

While 14 students indicated some factors regarding whether the attitudes of academicians had an effect on their preferring Russian as the language of instruction, 6 students stated that their attitudes had no effect at all. 4 students (S1, S10, S11, S15) stated that “Russian-speaking academicians grew up in the cities, therefore, they are more successful in communication”; 2 student (S1, S16) stated that “Kyrgyz-speaking academicians grew up in the villages, so, they are not successful in communication”; 2 student (S2, S19) stated that “Russian-speaking academicians have seen different countries; so, they are different”; 8 students (S3, S6, S9, S10, S13, S16, S19, S20) stated that “Russian-speaking academicians ensure that students participate in lessons” and 4 students (S6, S9, S10, S15) stated that “Russian-speaking academicians listen to the opinions of students”. 8 students (S2, S4, S5, S7, S8, S14, S17, S18) emphasized that the attitudes of academicians had no effect at all.

3.5 Findings Related to the 5th Sub-Problem of “Has the Desire to Learn a Foreign Language Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 7. Students’ views on the effect of the desire to learn a foreign language on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
The aim of the students coming from villages is to improve their Russian	6	30
Some of the students could not learn Russian in Bishkek, so they went to Russia or returned to their villages	2	10
I do not regard Russian as a foreign language	10	50
Knowing Russian works when learning other languages	4	20
No effect at all	8	40

In response to whether the desire to learn a foreign language has been effective in the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in universities; 6 students (S1, S7, S10, S13, S14, S19) stated that “The aim of the students coming from villages is to improve their Russian”; 2 student (S2, S16) stated that “Some of the students could not learn Russian in Bishkek, so they went to Russia or returned to their villages”; 10 students (S4, S5, S6, S8, S9, S11, S12, S14, S19, S20) stated that “they do not regard Russian as a foreign language”; 4 students (S2, S3, S6, S13) stated that “Knowing Russian works when learning other languages”. In addition, 8 students (S4, S5, S8, S9, S15, S16, S17, S18) stated that it had no effect at all.

3.6 Findings Related to the 6th Sub-Problem of “Has the Popularity of Russian Among the People Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 8. Students’ views on the effect of the popularity of Russian among people on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
Russian-speaking people are considered more civilized	8	40
Russian-speaking people are considered educated	14	70
People who know Russian well are employed in important jobs	2	10
English is more popular than Russian	4	20
Russian-speaking people are considered modern	6	30
No effect at all	4	20

In response to the question inquiring the effect of the popularity of Russian among people on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university; 8 students (S1, S3, S5, S8, S12, S13, S15, S20) stated that “Russian-speaking people are considered more civilized”; 14 students (S1, S3, S5, S6, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S20) stated that “Russian-speaking people are considered educated among people”; 2 student (S1, S12) stated that “People who know Russian well are employed in important jobs”; 4 students (S4, S7, S13, S15) stated that “English is more popular than Russian” and 6 students (S3, S8, S10, S11, S13, S15) stated that “Russian-speaking people are considered modern” whereas 4 students (S2, S17, S18, S19) stated that the popularity of Russian had no effect at all.

3.7 Findings Related to the 7th Sub-Problem of “Has the Social Pressure Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 9. Students’ views on the effect of the social pressure on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
My relatives and family suggested that I prefer Russian	14	70
Our acquaintances in the city influenced us on this decision	4	20
There was no verbal pressure but psychological pressure from the society	14	70
No effect at all	-	-

In response to the 7th question inquiring the effect of social pressure on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university; 14 students (S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S11, S12, S13, S14, S16, S19, S20) stated that “Their relatives and family suggested that they prefer Russian”; 4 students (S2, S10, S14, S17) stated that “Their acquaintances in the city influenced them on this decision” whereas 14 students (S3, S4, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S17, S18) stated that “There was no verbal pressure but psychological pressure within the society”.

3.8 Findings Related to the 8th Sub-Problem of “Has the Inadequacy of the Sources in Kyrgyz Language Been Effective in Your Preferring Russian as the Language of Instruction?”

Table 10. Students’ views on the effect of the inadequacy of the sources in Kyrgyz language on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university

Subcategories	Student (n=20)	
	f	%
Even if you prefer a department in Kyrgyz, you still need to apply to Russian sources	14	70
There is no Kyrgyz source on the internet	10	50
All the sources related to my major are in Russian	6	30
The works translated to Kyrgyz is incomplete or incorrect	6	30
Kyrgyz sources contain obsolete information	6	30
No effect at all (S2)	2	10

In response to the 8th question inquiring the effect of inadequacy of Kyrgyz sources on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in university; 14 students (S1, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S18) stated that “Even if they prefer a department in Kyrgyz, they still need to apply to Russian sources”; 10 students (S1, S5, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15) stated that “There is no Kyrgyz source on the internet”; 6 students (S3, S7, S8, S9, S14, S15) stated that “All the sources related to their majors are in Russian”; 6 students (S3, S4, S10, S11, S12, S19) stated that “The works translated to Kyrgyz is incomplete or incorrect” and 6 students (S4, S6, S10, S15, S20) stated that “Kyrgyz sources contain obsolete, outdated information”. Besides, 2 students said that this had no effect at all, and that students coming from rural places do not think about that.

4. Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Discussion

4.1.1 Education Quality

It was observed that all 8 questions asked to the university students had effects on their preferring Russian as the language of instruction. Among the answers given to the question “Has the education quality been effective in your preferring Russian as the language of instruction”; the answer that was most frequently given by the students was that “The academicians who received education in Kyrgyz have inadequate professional knowledge since they were educated with Kyrgyz sources with incomplete or incorrect information”. To eliminate this deficiency of academicians, Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Education and Science established the Institute for the Promotion or Regulation of the Quality of Educational Services. Dyūseeva (2017), the director of this institute, said in an interview to Kyrgyzstan’s official educational newspaper, that an academician training program with more updated information as demanded by the requirements of the age would be prepared. Two of the students said that the Russian-speaking academicians were educated in Russia; so, there is a difference of education quality. This answer, given by the students, also overlaps with what Kyrgyzstan’s Moscow Ambassador Otunbayev said. During his visit to Moscow State Linguistic University, Otunbayev stated that there are 16,000 Kyrgyz citizens from Kyrgyzstan who study in universities in various cities of Russia and that the Kyrgyz give importance to studying in Russia. He also stated that in Kyrgyzstan, the people who graduate from Russian universities are highly valued (Otunbayev, 2017). What Otunbayev says supports the answers given by the students.

In addition, one of the examples given by the students who stated that the education given by the Russian departments is better quality is that the majority of the scientific terms are in Russian. Thus, since the academicians cannot find the Kyrgyz meanings of the terms, they have to describe them with inexplicable words or to use the Russian language. Tagayev (2015, p. 10), who work at the Russian Language Department of the Slavyan University in Kyrgyzstan, M. C. Tagayev to this and said that today almost all of the scientific terms in Kyrgyz are in fact in Russian, and that the Kyrgyz-speaking person is unaware of the fact that he/she uses these Russian terms. Editor-in-Chief of the Kyrgyz National Encyclopedia and at the same time terminologist, Tagayev (2015), complained about this issue and said that there were no Kyrgyz terms; even if there were, these terms were incorrectly translated terms with no validity. Russian terms are used by all Kyrgyz-speaking people in all areas such as education, economy, and the media. In other words, an educated person has to know all of these terms; thus, the Russian protects its feature of being the “Science Language”.

4.1.2 The Fact that Russian is the Official Language

Some of the examples that students gave regarding their views on Russian as the official language of Kyrgyzstan include that “state authorities, officials in public institutions speak Russian and news on TV is presented in Russian” (Borishpolets, 2014, p. 66). Among the countries separated from the USSR, Russian has become the common language of communication (Kulichenko, 2010, p. 310). Because Russian is the official language, people have to know Russian in order to be informed about the politics in the country, to perform public services or to understand administrators. This inevitably leads to the people living in the villages to prefer Russian as the language of instruction in universities—even though they do not know Russian—in order to integrate into the urban life.

4.1.3 Concern for the Future

Another factor that had an effect on university students’ selection of Russian as the language of instruction was their concern for the future. This factor was identified by the participants as the most effective factor in preferring Russian as the language of instruction. The hope of finding a better quality and higher-paid job in Russia or in Kyrgyzstan in the future ranks first among the reasons why the students prefer Russian as the

language of instruction (Kulichenko, 2010, p. 310). All of the students stated that this was very effective. Among the examples given by the students for this factor, most frequently stated one was that “there is a high possibility of finding jobs in Russian-speaking countries”. In the second place is the opportunity to work in Russia, which is a natural consequence of this previous factor. The answers of the students also overlap with the statements of S. Yepifantsev (Shipilov, 2015, p. 14), President of the Vladimir Orthodox Charitable Society in Kyrgyzstan. On this subject, he said “*It is possible to have a renaissance of the Russian language as we wish today. The leading section of the people is returning to the understanding that Russia has a vital importance for their children because most of these children will have to seek jobs abroad, especially in Russia.*” In addition to working abroad, to be able to work in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, one needs to know Russian. 5 of the participants expressed their views in this direction. Two of the participants said that the large firms in Kyrgyzstan demand their employees know Russian when recruiting them. Three participants also complained about the lack of jobs in their villages.

4.1.4 Attitudes of Academicians

Another factor that students expressed their views on was the attitudes of the academicians. Almost half of the students said that there was no difference between the attitudes of the Russian-speaking and Kyrgyz-speaking academicians. 4 students indicated that Russian-speaking academicians ensure that students participate in their lessons. In addition, students stated that Russian-speaking academicians care about students’ opinions; they are more successful in communication with students since they grew up in the city and they have seen different countries. The Russian Federation is also pursuing various policies to increase the number of Kyrgyz students in higher education in Russia. For example, the Russian Federation allocates 250 places a year to Kyrgyz students with full scholarship (Shipilov, 2015, p. 15).

4.1.5 The Desire to Learn a Foreign Language

University students expressed their opinion on whether or not their desire to learn foreign languages was effective in their selection of Russian as the language of instruction. Almost half of the students stated that this factor is not effective in their preferring Russian as the language of instruction. Five of the students said they did not consider Russian as a foreign language. According to some of the students, the purpose of the students coming from villages is to improve their Russian language, and that knowing Russian works when learning other languages.

4.1.6 Its Popularity Among the Public

University students gave different answers and examples to the effect of the popularity of Russian among people on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction. Among these examples, the most frequent one given by the students was the fact that Russian-speaking people were considered educated by the people. Besides, the students said that those who know Russian are seen as modern, civilized etc. among the people, and that those who know Russian are employed in important positions. Two students said that the Russian language used to have a higher status among the people, but English is more popular than Russian today. When the related literature is examined, it can be seen that there are academicians (Vladimirovich, 2010; Savichev, 2014) according to whom the effect of English is increasing along with Russian.

4.1.7 Social Pressure

When the students were asked about the effect of social pressure on their selection of Russian as the language of instruction in the university, a large proportion of the students said that their relatives or families suggested them that they learn Russian. Again, most of the students stated that there is not a verbal but a psychological pressure in the society. Sadikova (2011), a Kyrgyz language teacher at Celal Abad Medical College, stated that although it has been 22 years since the separation from the USSR, medical documents such as prescriptions are still prepared in Russian.

4.1.8 Lack of Sources

One of the factors which, according to university students, are effective in the selection of Russian as the language of instruction is the lack of Kyrgyz sources in the educational life. Most of the students said that even though they prefer Kyrgyz as the language of instruction, they still have to apply to Russian sources. Half of the students agreed that there are no Kyrgyz sources on the internet. Furthermore, students stated that the sources related to their majors are in Russian, that the sources translated into Kyrgyz are incomplete or incorrect and Kyrgyz sources are outdated. Tagayev (2015, p. 11) stated that the vast majority of geographical terms and names are in Russian. Arefyef, the president of Moscow Social Research Center (2014, p. 36) drew attention to this situation and said that not only in Kyrgyzstan but also in all CIS countries, the sources are in Russian. In

other words, today, in almost all of the CIS countries, departments such as engineering and especially medicine give education in Russian. The most important reason for this is that almost all sources and terms are in Russian.

Since the sources in Kyrgyzstan are usually in Russian, the academicians have to know Russian. Under an agreement between Russia and Kyrgyzstan in 2012, all the books periodically published by the 20 famous Russian publishing houses, 1884 publications on Russian teaching and CD-books were given at no charge (Shipilov, 2015, p. 15). The books donated from Russia are in Russian as well as they contain the facts of Russia (UNICEF, 2012, p. 63). In other words, an intellectual who is raised reading Russian books has the worldview and perspective of a Russian citizen.

4.2 Conclusion

The university students who participated in the research expressed their views on the reasons that influence the choice of Russian as the language of education. According to the students, the reason that is most effective on the selection of Russian as the language of instruction in the university is “concern for the future”. The fact that Russian is spoken in almost all of the countries which separated from the USSR gives hopes to the students that they can work in these countries. Among these countries, Russia is the first country that comes to the mind of Kyrgyz students. What Germany meant for Turkey between 1950 and 1980 is the same as what Russia means for Kyrgyzstan now. Furthermore, most of the large firms in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the capital Bishkek, prefer Russian-speaking employees during recruitment. It has also been understood that due to the scarcity of job opportunities in the cities and villages other than Bishkek, students prefer Russian as the language of instruction.

Another important reason which, according to the students, is effective in the selection of Russian as the language of instruction is the inadequacy of education materials in the Kyrgyz language. Kyrgyz students said that even though they prefer the Kyrgyz language as the language of instruction, they still have to apply to Russian sources. Almost all of the students agree on this. Because, students stated that the majority of scientific books and terms are in Russian, and that books translated from Russian into Kyrgyz are incorrect or incomplete. Students also stated that since many of the Kyrgyz books are from the USSR period, they contain outdated information. In this regard, university students will normally prefer the language which is used in the sources of their departments.

The students who participated in the research said that one of the reasons for preferring Russian as the language of instruction was the pressure from their families, environment and society. They said that the fact that the official language of Kyrgyzstan is Russian especially increases this pressure. The examples given by the students were quite meaningful. They said that their administrators speak in Russian, officials in government offices speak Russian and demand the documents in Russian, and mass media report the news in Russian. They expressed that there was a psychological pressure in the society.

One of the ideas that students often accept is that people who speak Russian are considered as more civilized, more educated and modern. Some of the participants said that people who can speak Russian are employed in important positions in all layers of the society. They also stated that Russian-speaking academicians were more understanding and kinder towards their students; therefore, they were more successful in their relationships with their students. According to the opinions of the students, Russian-speaking academicians ensure that their students participate in the lesson and they care for what their students think.

4.3 Recommendations

The fact that the Kyrgyz language is disappearing and foreign languages, especially Russian and English, are becoming more dominant in the educational life in Kyrgyzstan emerge as a major problem for Kyrgyzstan on the path to nationalization. The Kyrgyz governments must investigate the ways to eliminate this problem before it is too late. In this direction, the following suggestions can be made:

- 1) Universities giving Kyrgyz education should provide Kyrgyz lessons in the departments all of the sources of which are in Russian. Thus, students will be able to receive education in their own mother tongue as well as learn a foreign language. This will allow students to prefer Kyrgyz as the language of instruction.
- 2) Another recommendation is that a translation commission consisting of academicians should be established immediately to make the Kyrgyz language the language of science. This commission should translate the main sources in other foreign languages, especially in Russian, into Kyrgyz. Thus, both scientific terms will be translated into Kyrgyz and the problem of the absence of Kyrgyz sources will be eliminated.
- 3) A study on Kyrgyz terms should be initiated and terminologists should be directed to this area. In particular, technical terms in Russian should be translated into Kyrgyz by experts.

- 4) Russian should no more be the official language and efforts should be made to ensure that public services are in Kyrgyz language.
- 5) Firms operating in Kyrgyzstan should be obliged to recruit employees who can speak Kyrgyz.
- 6) Universities and faculties providing education in Kyrgyz should be supported. Job opportunities should be offered to the students studying at these universities and faculties.

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