

IRSTI 14.25.09

Original Article
10.51889/2960-1649.2025.65.4.007*BAŞ ÖZLEM¹, IBRAIKHANOVA ALUA^{2*}, NURBEKOVA SALTANAT³*¹*Hacettepe University (Ankara, Turkey)*²*Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University (Almaty, Kazakhstan)*³*Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University (Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

*Address of correspondence: Alua Ibraikhanova, 2nd year doctoral student, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, Dostyk ave., 13, Almaty, 050010, Republic of Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0745-3667>, E-mail address: ibraikhanovaalua@gmail.com / Tel.: +77026023913

Innovative Approaches to the Development of Reading Literacy in Primary School Students

Abstract

Introduction. The article examines the problem of developing reading literacy among primary school students in the context of increasing information flows and the shift to competency-based education; the relevance is justified by the need to enhance students' ability to understand, interpret, and apply written information. *Methodology and Methods.* A mixed-methods approach was used, including an online survey "A Reading Nation!" among 130 students in Grades 3 to 4, diagnostic tasks, and document analysis; quantitative data were analyzed through frequency and percentage distribution, while qualitative responses were processed using content analysis. *Results.* The study showed that most students are interested in reading, although regular reading habits are not fully formed; fairy tales and adventure stories dominate preferences, family support strongly influences motivation and comprehension, while limited access to modern books and insufficient school-based initiatives remain barriers. *Scientific novelty.* The study provides new empirical evidence on the relationship between reading motivation, family reading practices, and the development of functional reading literacy in the early school years. *Practical significance.* The findings can guide the development of reading programs, strengthen school-family cooperation, and support strategies aimed at improving reading motivation and comprehension skills, contributing to the overall quality of primary education.

Keywords: reader, reading literacy, interest in reading, primary school students, text comprehension.

Introduction. In the modern era of the development of the information society, updating the content of education and increasing the demand for high-quality education in accordance with international standards, the problem of developing reading literacy among primary school students is becoming particularly relevant. In the context of the transition to a competency-based model of education, reading literacy is considered a key indicator of students' functional readiness for successful learning and active participation in society.

Reading literacy is a complex competence that includes not only the correct and expressive reading of a text, but also its understanding, content analysis, critical evaluation of the information received, and the application of knowledge in practice (Abildina et.al., 2024;

Ruotsalainen et al., 2024). The results of international PIRLS and PISA studies show that the level of text comprehension and critical use of information by Kazakhstani students remains at an average (OECD, 2023). This result is largely explained by factors identified earlier: an insufficiently formed intrinsic motivation to read, a weak family reading culture, and a lack of systemic interaction between school and parents (Sarmurzin et al., 2021).

The pace of development is also influenced by the disparity in resource opportunities between rural and urban schools, differences in equipment levels, Internet access, and teacher qualifications. According to the Central Asia Program, the gap between students in rural and urban schools in Kazakhstan exceeds 30 points, which is equivalent to almost one year of study

(Nurbayev, 2021). In addition, extracurricular activities, project forms, and the home environment that promote the development of reading literacy are still insufficiently systematized (OECD, 2023).

According to scientific research, the concept of reading literacy has been actively studied in pedagogical science since the end of the 20th century. In international studies by the OECD and PIRLS, reading literacy is defined as the ability to understand and use written forms of language, build meaning from a variety of texts, critically evaluate them, and apply the information obtained to achieve one's own goals, develop knowledge, personal potential, and actively participate in society (OECD, 2018; Mullis & Martin, 2019).

Kazakhstani researchers K. Yerally, A. Konyrova, B. Isanova, A.K. Tolegenova, G.M. Kosybayeva, S.A. Uzakbayeva and others, in their works, emphasize that reading literacy is an integral component of the overall development of a child's personality and is formed in the process of complex interaction between family, school, and the socio-cultural environment. Such interaction is considered an important factor contributing to the growth of learning motivation, active participation in the educational process, and personal development of students (Eraly, 2020; Tolegenova, 2018). Thus, Aldaberdikyzy and Ayazbayeva (2020) define literacy not only as the ability to read and write, but also as part of social practice reflecting the ways a person interacts with the cultural and educational space. Tanatarova (2018) suggests effective methods of developing reading competence in elementary grades based on an activity-based approach and a systematic organization of literary reading lessons.

International experience also confirms the importance of an integrated approach. Keogh & McGillicuddy (2025), in a systematic review, showed that literacy formed at the primary education level has a long-term impact on the educational trajectories of students in secondary school. Studies by Snow et al., (1998), Mullis et al., (2017), and Krashen (2004) indicate that to increase motivation to read, effectively develop a family reading culture, strengthen the role of

the school library, and apply project forms of interaction. Despite the sufficient theoretical basis, in many studies, the ways of practical implementation of these ideas in primary schools and specific methodological recommendations require further systematization, which confirms the relevance of this study.

In this regard, the purpose of the study is to identify the pedagogical, psychological and social possibilities of developing reading literacy among primary school students and to develop scientific and methodological foundations for their effective application in the educational process. In the course of the work, the theoretical foundations of the concept of "reading literacy" are revealed, a comparative analysis of international and domestic experience is carried out, and methods aimed at increasing students' interest in reading and developing skills in working with text are systematized. The role of joint activities of teachers and parents is also considered, and the ways of effective organization of the educational environment are determined.

The results of the study can serve as a basis for the development of practical recommendations aimed at improving the content of education, improving academic achievements, and the level of functional literacy of students. The presented work has scientific and practical value for teachers, methodologists, heads of educational organizations, and parents, contributing to improving the quality of primary education.

The significance of the study is determined by its relevance to the modern education system and its scientific justification of effective approaches to developing reading literacy among primary school students, taking into account international experience. The systematic formation of reading literacy plays an important role in improving the academic achievements of students in primary education. This article discusses the main pedagogical capabilities, methods, and forms of interaction necessary for the development of reading literacy in younger schoolchildren. Understanding these aspects will allow teachers, parents, and heads of educational organizations to effectively organize the educational process, increase students' interest in reading, and

develop their functional literacy. In the course of the research, the following question was raised: “*What pedagogical opportunities influence the formation of reading literacy among primary school students?*” Considering the requirements of modern educational modernization and international research, the problem of developing reading literacy remains relevant and occupies an important place in the practice of primary education.

Materials and Methods. A mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative research techniques was applied to identify the opportunities contributing to the development of reading literacy among primary school students. The research sample consisted of 3rd- and 4th-grade students from primary schools in Almaty, who participated in an online survey administered via the Google Forms platform.

To collect data, survey and document analysis methods were employed. The questionnaire included items aimed at identifying the methods and strategies used by teachers and parents to foster reading literacy, the features of the learning environment, and the degree of parental involvement in promoting reading literacy at home. To assess students’ skills in text comprehension and content analysis, specially designed diagnostic tasks and reading comprehension tests were utilized. The collected

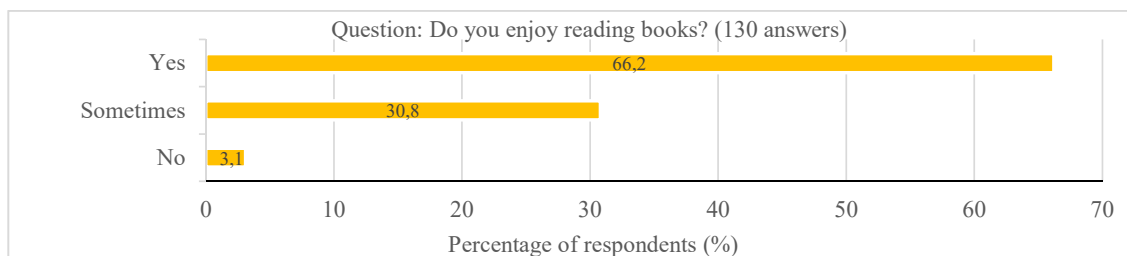
data was processed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Quantitative results were presented in terms of frequency, percentage distribution, and mean values, while qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, which enabled the identification of key thematic categories.

The theoretical framework of the study was based on the competency-based, learner-centered, and activity-based approaches. In addition, a comparative analysis of domestic and international research literature was conducted to systematize effective methodological recommendations. This research aimed to improve the scientific and methodological foundations for developing reading literacy within the primary education system. The validity and reliability of the findings were ensured through the comprehensive application of complementary research methods and triangulation of data sources.

Results. A total of 130 students from Grades 3 and 4 participated in the survey titled “*A Reading Nation!*”. The results provided comprehensive insights into the possibilities for developing reading literacy among primary school students. The findings revealed that 66.2% of students reported that they enjoy reading very much, 30.8% stated that they read occasionally, while 3% admitted that they rarely or never read books (Figure 1).

Figure 1

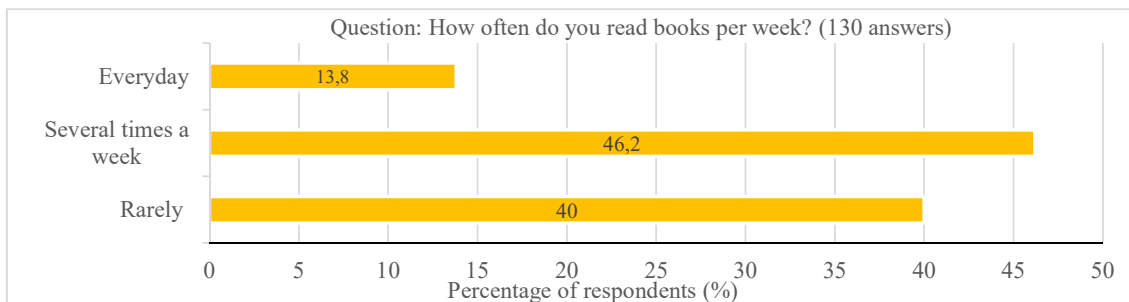
Students’ attitude toward reading.



Regarding reading frequency, 13.8 % of students indicated that they read every day, 46.2 % reported reading several times a week, and 40 % said they read rarely or irregularly. These results suggest that while a majority of

children read regularly, a significant proportion still engage with books sporadically, which highlights the need for strategies to support continuous reading habits among primary students (Figure 2).

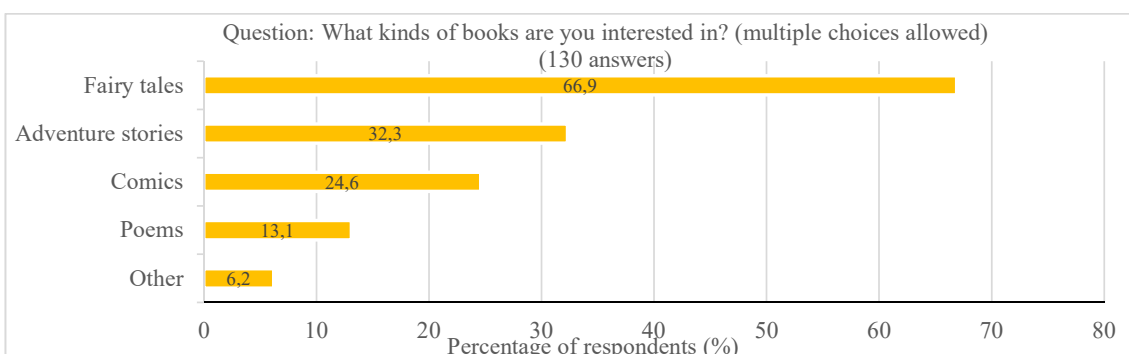
Figure 2
Reading frequency per week



Genre preferences were examined to identify the types of literature that attract primary school students (Figure 3). The results show that 66.9% of respondents preferred fairy tales,

while 32.3% selected adventure stories as their favorite genres. This indicates that younger children are especially drawn to imaginative and engaging narratives.

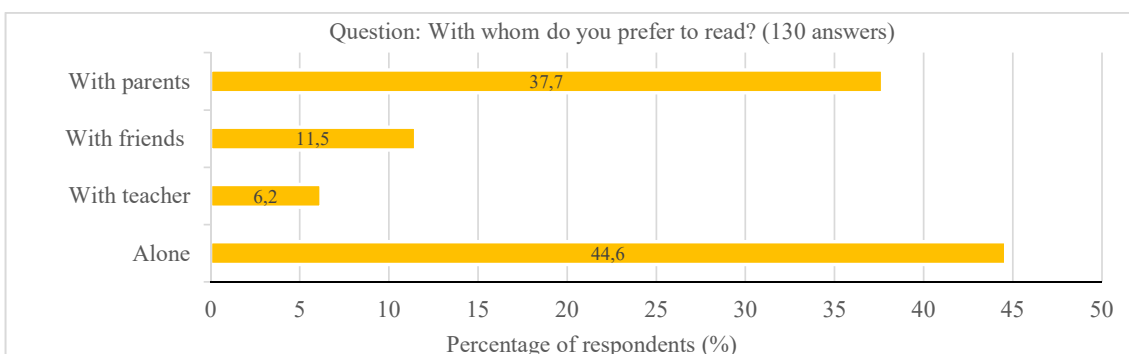
Figure 3
Students' reading preferences by genre.



In terms of family reading experience, 25.4% of students reported reading books with their parents, 63.8% do so from time to time, and 10.8% never read together. To the question

“Who do you like to read with?” 37.7% of schoolchildren replied that they prefer to read with their parents, 11.5% with friends, and 44.6% on their own (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Students' preferred reading partners



Regarding the discussion of books read and school forms of reading support, the results showed that 22.3% of students discuss books with friends, 63.1% with parents, and only 13% with teachers. This data indicate that the family plays a leading role in shaping the child's reading culture, while the potential of the school environment is not yet fully utilized. The issue of the availability of school forms of reading support has shown mixed results. Thus, only 27.7% of students reported that their schools actually have reading clubs or special reading hours aimed at developing interest in books and exchanging impressions. Another 28.5% noted that they do not have such forms of work, and 43.8% found it difficult to answer or did not

know about the existence of such initiatives.

During the survey, students were asked an open question: "What benefits does reading books bring you?" The answers were free-form and reflected the children's personal ideas about the importance of reading in their lives. Content analysis was used to process the open responses, which made it possible to identify key semantic categories that characterize students' perception of the benefits of reading. During the analysis, all responses were grouped by similar formulations and meanings, after which the frequency of mentions of each category was calculated relative to the total number of respondents ($n = 130$). The distribution results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories of students' responses to the question "what is the benefit of reading books for you?"

№	Main categories of students' responses	Typical Examples (Student Quotes)	Number of Mentions (out of 130)	Percentage (%)
1	Acquiring new knowledge and broadening outlook	"To gain knowledge", "It gives me knowledge", "To learn many things", "To get useful information", "To become educated."	52	40.0%
2	Developing thinking and cognitive abilities	"It develops my thinking skills", "It affects my brain", "It improves my mind", "It expands my outlook."	27	20.8%
3	Improving vocabulary, language, and literacy	"My vocabulary increases", "It improves my literacy", "It helps me practice my language", "My speech becomes better."	24	18.5%
4	Improving reading technique and speed	"To read faster", "To increase reading speed", "To learn to read quickly", "To understand faster."	10	7.7%
5	Improving memory and attention	"It improves my memory", "It strengthens my attention", "It helps with concentration."	6	4.6%
6	Developing imagination and creativity	"I learn to imagine", "It gives me new ideas and inspiration", "It develops my imagination."	4	3.1%
7	Personal growth and self-development	"It helps me become calm and thoughtful", "I improve myself", "It helps me achieve success."	4	3.1%
8	Enjoyment, interest, and relaxation	"It's interesting", "It relaxes my mind", "I spend my free time usefully."	3	2.3%

An analysis of 130 open responses from students showed that the majority of participants consider reading primarily as a cognitive and educational activity. The most common response category (40%) is related to gaining knowledge

and broadening one's horizons. The second most common category (20.8%) reflects the development of thinking and cognitive abilities. A significant proportion of students (18.5%) noted improvements in vocabulary, speech, and

literacy, while 7.7% indicated improvements in reading technique and speed. The answers related to the development of memory and attention (4.6%), imagination and creativity (3.1%), personal growth and self-improvement (3.1%), as well as interest and recreation (2.3%) were less common.

Among the main factors hindering the reading process, students most often noted a lack of free time (43.8%), which indicates the competition of reading with other activities (homework, gadgets, clubs). In second place is a low interest in the content of books (26.9%), which indicates the lack of attractiveness of the offered school and extracurricular reading. Another 24.6% of the respondents indicated the limited book resources - a lack of interesting, modern, or accessible publications. A small proportion of students (14.6%) noted the lack of comfortable reading conditions at home or at school.

Discussion. A study conducted with the participation of 130 students in grades 3-4 provided a holistic view of the current state of reading literacy in primary school children. The results are generally consistent with the findings of international comparative studies by PIRLS and PISA, according to which family support, a variety of text materials, and a stimulating school environment are key conditions for the successful formation of reading literacy (OECD, 2023; Mullis et al., 2017; Mullis & Martin, 2019). The data obtained confirmed that students who have experience of reading together with their parents demonstrate a higher level of understanding of the text and semantic analysis. This corresponds to the conclusions of Abildina et al. (2024), which show that the development of reading literacy is directly related to pedagogical support and the systemic involvement of the family in the educational process.

The majority of schoolchildren (66.2%) reported that they really enjoy reading, but only 13.8% do it daily, and 40% do it irregularly. This difference between interest and actual practice reflects the need to build stable reading habits. Similar trends are noted in the OECD (2023) reports, which highlight the impact of reduced

motivation to read in the context of leisure digitalization. Therefore, the pedagogical task is not only to teach reading techniques, but also to form a positive emotional experience that turns reading into a significant part of a child's personal time.

The genre preferences of the students demonstrate the emotional and imaginative orientation of reading: 66.9% prefer fairy tales, and 32.3% - adventure texts. These results are consistent with the data from Ruotsalainen et al. (2024), which confirm that cognitive and emotional engagement are enhanced when working with artistic and narrative texts, where the child can relate to the characters and actively develop imagination.

The interest in visual formats is noteworthy: about 18% of students chose comics as an attractive form of reading. This fact confirms the concept of "free voluntary reading" (Krashen, 2004), according to which free and voluntary reading, including visually oriented texts, increases motivation and promotes a gradual transition to more complex literary genres. Therefore, the inclusion of comics, adapted short stories, and graphic stories in the educational environment can be considered an effective means of engaging novice readers.

An analysis of open responses showed that 40% of students perceive reading as a source of new knowledge and expanding horizons, 20.8% - as a development of thinking, and 18.5% note the influence of reading on improving speech and literacy. These data indicate the predominance of cognitive motivation, which coincides with the conclusions of Abildina et al., (2024) on the importance of metacognitive components in the formation of functional literacy in elementary school students. At the same time, the relatively low proportion of responses related to the pleasure of reading and emotional experience of the text suggests the need to actively apply playful and creative forms of work that enhance the aesthetic component of the reading experience.

The family involvement factor was particularly pronounced: 25.4% of students read books with their parents, 63.8% read books from time to time, and 10.8% have no such experience. More than 60% of children discuss books with

their families, while only 13% discuss books with their teachers. This highlights the key role of the family environment and the need for a systematic partnership between the school and parents, which is also noted in the works of Aldaberdikyzы & Ayazbayeva (2020), which emphasizes the importance of synergy between pedagogical and socio-cultural practices in the formation of sustained interest in reading.

At the same time, the results show that the school's potential is underutilized: only 27.7% of students noted the presence of clubs or special "reading hours," while 43.8% were unaware of their existence. This is consistent with the research of Sarmurzin et al. (2021), which indicates the need to expand institutional support for reader activity programs. The presence of clubs, library projects, and creative competitions contributes not only to increased motivation but also to the development of critical thinking and communication skills. Among the barriers to reading, students most often cited lack of time (43.8%), lack of interest in the content (26.9%), and limited book resources (24.6%). These data reflect the general socio-economic differences described in the Nurbayev study (2021), which highlights the disparity between urban and rural schools in Kazakhstan in terms of access to resources. Therefore, updating library collections and ensuring equal access to modern children's publications, including digital formats and multimedia texts, should be one of the priorities for the development of the primary education system.

In general, the results of the study confirm that the formation of reading literacy requires an integrated approach based on the interaction of three complementary factors: (1) systematic pedagogical support using interactive and game methods (Abildina et al., 2024); (2) active participation of parents who create a positive emotional atmosphere around reading (Aldaberdikyzы & Ayazbayeva, 2020); and (3) the availability of a supportive school environment conducive to the exchange of reading experiences and motivation (Mullis & Martin, 2019; OECD, 2023). Thus, the conducted research confirms that the development of reading literacy of younger schoolchildren in

Kazakhstan is possible only with the combined efforts of the family, school, and the teaching community. The renovation of libraries, the use of modern visual and artistic genres, as well as the introduction of game and project forms of reading, can strengthen children's interest in books and create conditions for the formation of functional literacy that meets international educational standards.

Conclusion. The conducted study made it possible to comprehensively analyze the level of development of reader literacy of Primary School students, the features of the formation of reading culture, and the main factors affecting it. The results of the study showed that most children of primary school age show a positive attitude towards reading; however, the habit of regular reading is not fully formed. It was found that the experience of reading together with parents, support in the family, and a stimulating environment at school contribute decisively to the effective development of reading literacy. The harmonious interaction of these three components - cooperation between the teacher, parents, and the student-will strengthen learning motivation and improve the skills of understanding and analyzing the text.

In addition, the results of the study revealed that the content and emotional aspects of reader interest are important: children often choose fairy tales and adventure texts and perceive the learning process as an interesting and creative experience. In this direction, it was noted that it is important to provide genre and visual diversity of educational materials. In general, the study proved that the formation of reader literacy is not only the development of language or cognitive skills, but also an important part of the child's personal, social, and cultural development. The results of the study can serve as a scientific basis for improving the educational process aimed at improving functional literacy and are an important step in the modernization of pedagogical experience in the system of primary education.

Acknowledgements. The authors express their sincere gratitude to colleagues for their methodological and scientific support during the research, to the school administration

for providing the opportunity to conduct the survey, and to the 3rd–4th grade students and their parents for their active participation and cooperation.

References:

Abildina, S., Sarsekeyeva, Z., Mukhametzhanova, A., Kopbalina, K., & Nurgaliyeva, S. (2024). Enhancing reading literacy among elementary school learners in Kazakhstan: The application and effectiveness of modern teaching techniques. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*, 8(8), 5905. <https://rep.ksu.kz/handle/data/19427?show=full>

Aldaberdikyzy, A., & Ayazbayeva, A. M. (2020). Reading literacy: definitions and implications. *Bulletin of LN Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Philology Series*, 131(2), 87-93. <https://bulphil.enu.kz/index.php/main/article/download/377/227>

Eraly Q. (2020). Ways to develop reading literacy of primary school students. *Bilim Alemi*, (3), 45–52.

Keogh, A. J., & McGillicuddy, D. (2025). The Role of Primary Literacy Education in Students' Educational Trajectories in Secondary School: A Systematic Literature Review. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 60(3), e70017. <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/rrq.70017>

Krashen, S. D. (2004). *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Hooper, M. (2017). *PIRLS 2016 International Results in Reading*. Boston College & IEA. <https://pirls2016.org/download-center/index.html>

Mullis, I. V., & Martin, M. O. (2019). *PIRLS 2021 Assessment frameworks*. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Herengracht 487, Amsterdam, 1017 BT, The Netherlands. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED606056>

Nurbayev, Z. (2021). *Inequality between students of rural and urban schools in Kazakhstan: Causes and ways to address it*. Central Asia Program. <https://www.centralasiaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/cap-paper-no.-268-zhaslan-nurbayev.pdf>

OECD (2018). PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): *What Students Know and Can Do*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>

OECD. (2023). PISA 2022 results (Volume I): *The state of learning and equity in education*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/12/pisa-2022-results-volume-i_76772a36/53f23881-en.pdf

Ruotsalainen, J., Pakarinen, E., Poikkeus, A. M., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2024). Associations between students' reading performance and literacy instruction in first grade: a cross-lagged study. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 39(3), 2223-2244. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10212-023-00784-4>

Sarmurzin, Y., Amanzhol, N., Toleubayeva, K., Zhunusova, M., & Amanova, A. (2021). The impact of OECD research on the education system of Kazakhstan. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 22(4), 757-766. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12564-021-09715-8>

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/6023/chapter/1>

Tanatarova Sh.M. (2018). *Methodology of teaching literary reading in primary grades*. Almaty: Qazaq universiteti. 180.

Tolegenova, A.Q. (2018). *Ways of forming reading interest of primary school students*. Almaty: Bilim. 56.

Information about the authors:

Baş Özlem, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Hacettepe University, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0716-103X, email: ozlembas@hacettepe.edu.tr

Ibraikhanova Alua, Doctoral Student, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University. ORCID ID: 0009-0004-0745-3667, email: ibraikhanovaalua@gmail.com

Nurbekova Saltanat, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Leader of the educational program “Pedagogy and Methodology of Primary Education”, Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4824-8702, email: zav.salta73@gmail.com