

Influence of Foreign Language Literature and Culture on Personal Priorities of Students in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The present article describes the study of the influence of foreign language literature and culture on the personal priorities of students formed in the process of learning foreign languages. In this context, we understand student youth as students of foreign language specialties of Kazakh universities who study foreign languages and literature. Today, English is the first foreign language in the secondary and higher education system of Kazakhstan. When choosing a second foreign language, preference is given to the German language at school and university. In the context of globalization, foreign languages and foreign language literature do not only interpret foreign language culture, but also contribute to the integration of certain cultural and behavioral attitudes into the native culture of students and their worldview. These attitudes are becoming more attractive to many young people than the values adopted in the national culture.

The relevance of the study is due to the attention of Kazakhstani society to the problem of educating young people in the context of globalization and the increasing influence of the so-called Western values on young people.

The aim of the research is to study and identify the value priorities of modern Kazakhstani student youth studying English and German at a professional level. The novelty of the study lies in the fact that for the first time the priorities of modern Kazakhstani student youth studying foreign languages, literature and cultures at the professional level were investigated and analyzed. We have identified their main value priorities at the present stage of development of Kazakhstani society and its entry into globalization processes. The article includes the theoretical analysis of the problem of formation of personal priorities in the study of the English language, literature and culture in various communities and conducting a sociological study among students of language specialties of the university.

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The study was attended by 149 students of language specialties of two universities, studying foreign languages (English and German) professionally. The study involved students aged 19 to 22 years. The study was conducted from September 2017 to December 2019. The measuring system was developed consisting of four questions and answers to these questions. Each student was to evaluate every answer on a 10-point system.

The study identified the following main priorities of students: the desire to be happy and healthy in life, to have a worthy partner for relationships and true family partners, they noted conscience and shame as important moral priorities and the desire to succeed in their profession.

The study of the personal priorities of young people in other countries shows that young people also value a good education, a healthy lifestyle, personal relationships, and the possibility of professional ambitions.

As a result of the research, it was found that the study of foreign languages, foreign language literature and culture by students of language specialties of the university gives them a high emotional impulse received when reading foreign language literature, forms a single stream of values of domestic, western and world culture, increases their self-esteem, without destroying the foundations of Kazakh identity, passed from generation to generation. However, personal priorities, attitudes and values can change in new generations living in new historical conditions.

Keywords: *foreign language, English, foreign language literature, personal priorities, culture, student youth, Western values, globalization, identity.*

I. Introduction

Currently, English as the language of international communication and the language of science is the first foreign language in the Kazakh system of higher professional education. Strengthening the position of English as a world language in the context of globalization is an important condition for realizing the social potential of Kazakhstan's student youth. The study of a foreign language, foreign literature and culture has a positive impact on the personality of students, develops intelligence, expands the lexicon, stimulates cognitive interest, allows them to understand and accept the value orientations of representatives of another socio-cultural system, attaches to the spiritual values of world culture, etc. Positive youth development is the practice of nurturing core internal strengths and abilities in children and teens. It is about providing opportunities for youth to believe in themselves and their abilities to influence their lives and the world around them. [Price Mitchell, 2017]

In the process of working with texts of foreign literature and culture, students are exposed to various aspects of life and behavior of people of another cultural civilization, the diversity of their moral, cultural and material values. Learning a foreign language has always been accompanied by an expansion of horizons of students. When reading fiction, the communication with the author and the heroes of the work takes place on a deep emotional level.

The study of a foreign language and literature is accompanied by the formation of students not only linguistic knowledge and skills, but also is accompanied by the development of the so-called "emotional intelligence". [Price Mitchell, 2017]

The purpose of the research is to study and determine the personal priorities of students studying foreign language literature and culture in the language specialties of Kazakh universities. In addition, we have to find out whether foreign language literature and culture can change the personal priorities of students and their cultural identity, personal priorities are personal qualities, human beliefs, and ideals that contribute to personal development, spiritual growth, and self-knowledge and life.

The object of the study is the current personal priorities of students studying in the language specialties of universities. The subject of research is the changes that occur in the structure of personal priorities, which are formed as a result of reading foreign literature and getting acquainted with the cultural phenomena of the country of the studied language.

The hypothesis of our research consists in the assumption that foreign language literature and culture have a positive impact on the personal priorities and cultural values of a student studying a foreign language as a specialty, strengthen and enrich the traditional values of the Kazakh society.

In this context, we do not consider culture as a set of art traditions. Culture is a tradition, way of life, beliefs, ideology, ideas about the world (worldview), value system, and much more. [Ter-Minasova, 2015: 1-7] At the same time, culture is a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, including attitudes, values, ideas, norms and behaviors that are common to the group, but implemented in a different way by each specific association within the group, passed from generation to generation, relatively stable, but able to change over time. [Matsumoto, 2008: 38].

Currently, there are certain fears in society that foreign culture, one of the sources of which is foreign-language literature, will lead to the loss of national spiritual and cultural values, a change in their own identity, and young people will accept "foreign" patterns that are alien to their social group so closely that they will consider them the only acceptable ones and move away from "their own". [Sadykov, 2001] Traditional Kazakh values are considered to be patriotism, hard work, tolerance, respect for the older generation, and family values. But nowadays modern youth lives in an era of changing traditional values in every country. The youth of Kazakhstan is no exception.

According to some studies, in the youth environment, intangible values dominate over material ones - family values, health, material well-being, self-realization [Rostovskaya, Kaliyev, 2018:84]; at the same time E. Yesengarayev identifies five key values of Kazakhstani people - power, richness, kinship, friendship, health. [Yesengarayev, 2019]; only 1.1% of young people care about their rights and freedoms, while family, health, material well-being, and friends occupy, respectively, 1,2,3,4 places, and service to the motherland - 0.3 %. [Islamgulova, 2013: 61; Gallyamova, 2015:188]

In this regard, it is relevant to study the impact of foreign language literature and culture on the personal priorities of students in Kazakhstan in modern conditions. In the context of globalization and international integration, it is impossible to stop the process of interpenetration of cultures and civilizations. Young people break stereotypes, behaviors, way of thinking, and personal priorities in a globalizing world. [Ter-Minasova, 2015: 1-7]

II. Review

In the process of learning a foreign language, the process of interpenetration of cultures is inevitable. Culture is shaped and transmitted through language. Language at the same time reflects culture. The familiar “Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis” indicates that language is a guide to culture and social reality. [Sapir, E., 1931; cited in Lu& Chen 2011, p.56]

In the classroom, students get acquainted not only with language categories, but they form a language picture of the world, concepts that represent unique layers of a different life, a different worldview and attitude. Foreign language literature is a part of world literature and culture. It informs students about people's behavior patterns, their way of life, and the problems of the individual and society. Reading literature in a foreign language and getting to know other people's cultural phenomena form certain cultural ideals, moral values that change their attitude to their own life, to the moral postulates accepted in society.

Students gain skills in working with a foreign language text: they learn to understand the content of the text globally and in detail, interpret the content, understand the author's intention, understand the structure of the text, learn reflection from the reader's point of view, learn the system of social and historical values, interpret the text from the position of personal life experience. The student enters into a dialogue with the text. [Ehlers, 1996: 26] Students develop their ability to understand other people's culture and new moral standards, and they realize the need to recognize a different cultural identity, a different truth, and the need for tolerant intercultural communication in modern conditions.

Texts of foreign language literature and culture allow the student to understand their own boundaries, if necessary, change them, because culture manifests itself in them. “General restrictions that narrow the behavioral repertoire available to members of a certain socio-cultural group, in a different way than in the case of individuals belonging to some other group.” [Poortinga, 1990: 6; cited in Matsumoto, D., 2008, p.37]

The first methods of teaching a foreign language in Europe were grammar-translation and text-translation methods. In addition to teaching vocabulary and grammar, they set as their goal the development of students. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, it became obvious that teaching a foreign language is more effective if the learning process is accompanied by the study of the culture of native speakers in all its manifestations. In the 21st century, in the era of globalization and international integration, the study of languages and cultures becomes a priority for young people. “Evidence suggests that students can achieve greater success in language learning if teachers integrate culture into the language and in the classroom, meaning that students will be immersed in the entire culture of the target language.” [Sorani Karim Salim, 2017: 468]

At the same time, Shakiba Razmeh et al. believes that personality changes and integration with Western culture cannot be considered a problem; however, this becomes problematic when such change interferes with and misdirects communication and learning, respectively, due to overuse of the target culture, that is, American culture. [Shakiba Razmeh et al., 3]

Shirley Barber in her research about learning English in Egypt notes “that the students tend to become confused when they are faced with the new culture of the second language. They now have to understand and accommodate this in to their sense of identity and their culture, and this often leads to uncertainty. Furthermore, it

results in the student feeling unsure as to where they belong in the community, as they will feel 'out of place'. (Shirley Barber, 2012: 2)

Russian scientist Millrood R.P. notes that the wary cautious attitude of students to certain aspects of English culture means that Russian students have not entered the real world, which can be harsh and unpleasant at times. This once again highlights the need to include a cultural dimension in the curriculum. [Millrood, 2016:106] Another Russian scientist Shmeleva Zh.N. investigated the problem of the impact of the Russian language on foreign students in the process of learning the Russian language. She concluded that the multi-ethnic and multicultural student environment, which is studying Russian as a foreign language, assimilates the universal values of world culture. [Shmeleva, 2019: 106]

Researchers of this problem in Bangladesh believe that, regardless of whether the subjects of Western literary texts are "Eastern" or "Western", they are immersed in Western culture and broadcast it to students. Culture is one of those concepts that is important in teaching English/western literature. In the unequal and grossly unjust world order of today, it is one of those markers which is denied, appropriated, annulled, modified, destabilized and made to serve the purposes [M. S. Islam, Sheikh Nahid Neazy, Golam Gaus Al-Quadery, 2010: 47-48]

Chinese scientists have also come to the conclusion that "language change reflects and promotes cultural change by a comparative examination of language and value orientations in the traditional Chinese culture and contemporary Chinese culture". [Lu &Chen, 2011]

All scientists emphasize that when learning a foreign language (English), changes in the personal priorities of a young person in the context of globalization are inevitable. At the same time, researchers expressed concern that the process of learning a foreign language affects the personality of students and a sense of community.

III. Methods

Our study was attended by 149 students of 3-4 courses studying in the educational programs "Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages" and "Translation Studies" at two universities in the city of Kokshetau - at Abay Myrzakhmetov Kokshetau University and Shokan Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University. The study participants are students aged 19-22, of which 80.6% (120 people) are women and 19.4% (29 people) are men. As a rule, the number of female students in the programs "Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages" and "Translation Studies" significantly exceeds the number of male students. All participants in the experiment had substantial reading and speaking skills in English. They were observed for five semesters.

When conducting the study, we used the following methods: observation, expert method, questioning. The study was conducted for three years, starting from the third semester in September 2017 and ended in the seventh semester, in December 2019.

The questionnaire procedure consisted of the following steps. We have developed a questionnaire consisting of four blocks. Each block consisted of one question and answer options for it - from seven to twelve answers. The selection of answers for our questionnaire was determined on the basis of long-term observation by experts of an experimental group of students over five semesters. The questions and answers of the questionnaire were influenced by both the traditional values of Kazakhstani society and the values relevant to the world

community in the era of globalization. In addition, the discussion in the classroom of the problems raised by the authors of literary works made it possible to formulate both questions and answers to them.

Each participant in the experiment evaluated the answers on a ten-point system in accordance with the degree of importance for themselves. Before the test, students received instructions on how to fill out a test questionnaire for each of the four questions. Students were allowed to write their dissenting opinions, if necessary. The structure of the questionnaire included four questions:

- 1: What gives you reading literature in foreign languages?
- 2: What aspects do you pay attention to when reading literature in foreign languages?
- 3: What feelings and desires arouse in you when reading foreign literature?
- 4: What is important to you in life?

The first question “What gives you reading literature in foreign languages?” allows us to find out the important function of foreign language literature in the development of students.

The second question “What aspects do you pay attention to when reading literature in foreign languages?” allows us to find out what things interest students in the reading process.

The third question “What feelings and emotions does foreign literature awaken in you?” allow us to find out the emotional component of the reading process itself.

The fourth question “What is valuable to you in life?” allows us to find out what aspects of life are important today for young people.

IV. Results

In accordance with the brief description of the questionnaire and the interpretation of the answers to the posed questions, we can describe the data that was obtained as a result of the study.

Before starting the study, students were asked the question “Do you think that reading foreign language literature makes you a person different from others?” 98 % of participants answered “Yes”, 2% - “No”.

Figure 1 shows the results of the answers to the first question “What gives you reading literature in foreign languages?” They allowed us to conclude that students see foreign language literature primarily as a source of information that expands their general outlook. As linguists, they put vocabulary in second place, without knowledge of new words it is impossible to understand information. The third position is the development of imaginative, logical thinking and speech, as students discuss the content and meanings of the text, its language characteristics and structural elements in the classroom. In the fourth position is the answer "helps to detect shortcomings in their upbringing and education." Further, the students noted that reading foreign language literature changes the way of thinking, increases self-esteem, helps to understand other cultures, expands the horizons of people's problems in another culture, which develops empathy and reduces stress and anxiety.

Figur 1: What gives you reading literature in foreign language ?

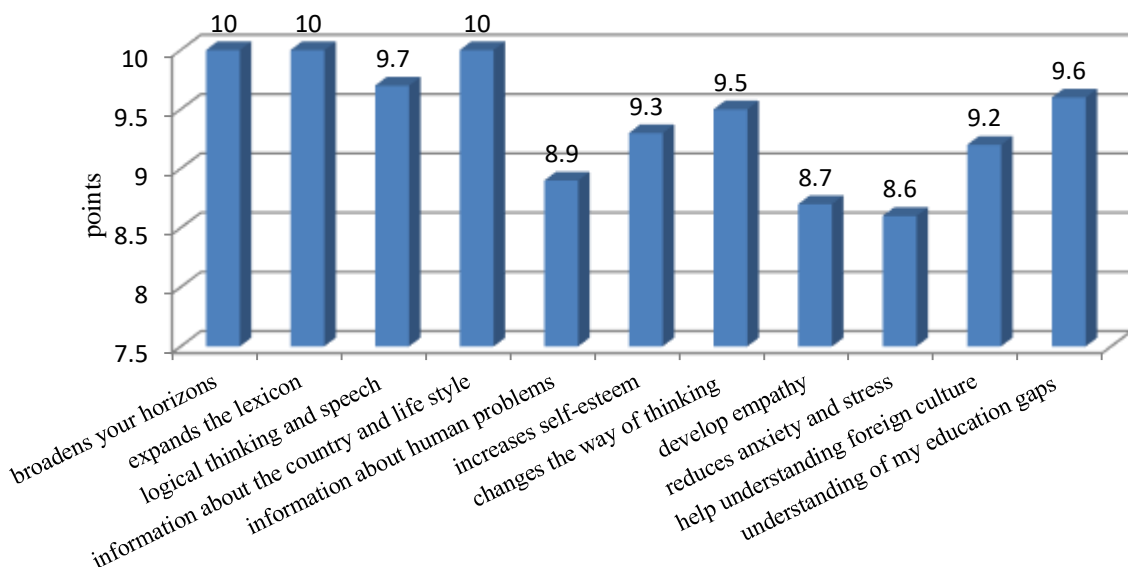


Figure 2 allowed us to review the students’ answers to the question “What aspects do you pay attention to when reading foreign language literature?” The diagram shows that students are most interested in the characters of the work, their feelings, actions, experiences, and appearance. The characters of the book are images of people who lived in a certain historical era. They help to understand the meaning of the book, the interests of people, their problems, joys and sorrows. The characters of the books and their feelings and actions make students suffer, reflect, and analyze. The heroes of the books can be ideal for students. Some heroes become a symbol of evil.

Figur 2: What aspects do you pay attention to when reading foreign language literature?

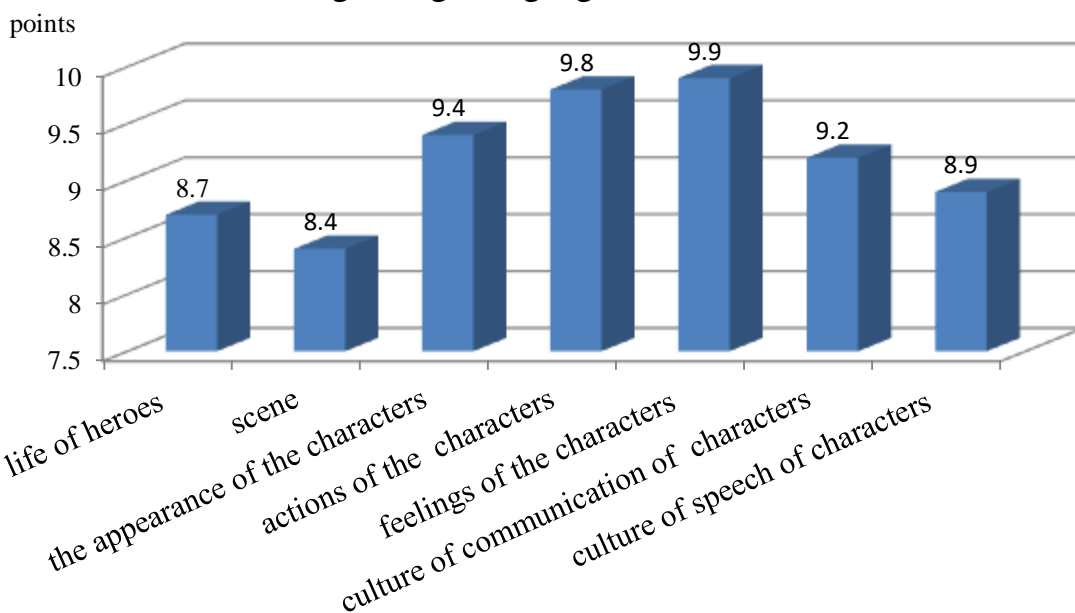


Figure 3 shows what feelings and desires are aroused in students by reading foreign language literature. These feelings include a sense of justice, a desire to live in a world where evil is punished and justice triumphs, a

desire to meet true love, be successful in life, travel, and dream. Literary heroes and the events of their life have formed the conviction that justice must prevail and evil must be punished. Read works motivated young people to achieve success in life.

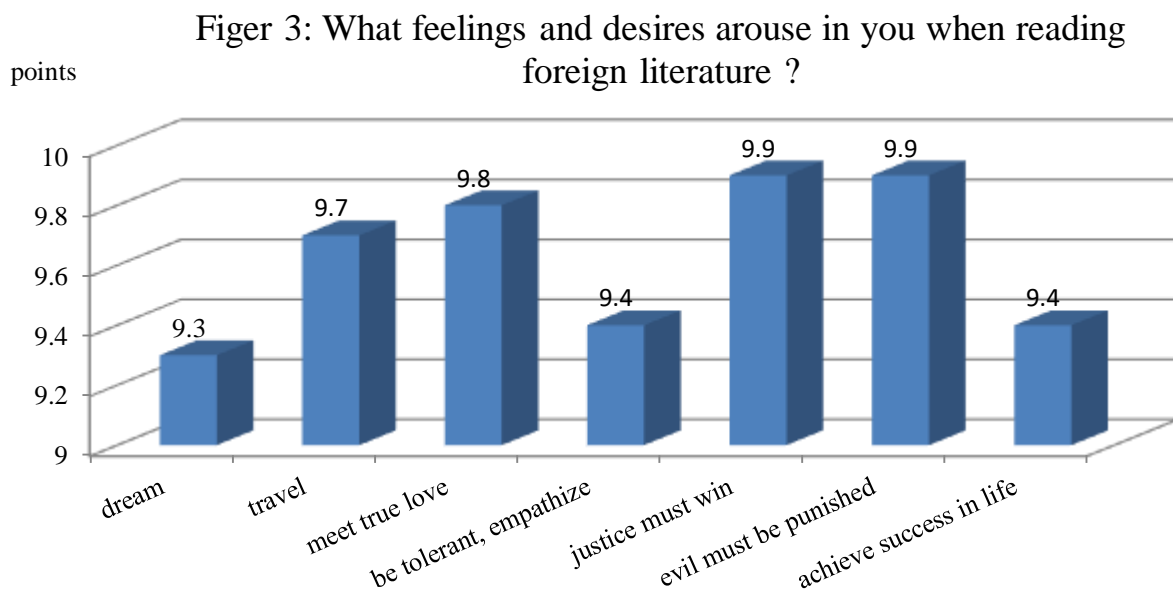
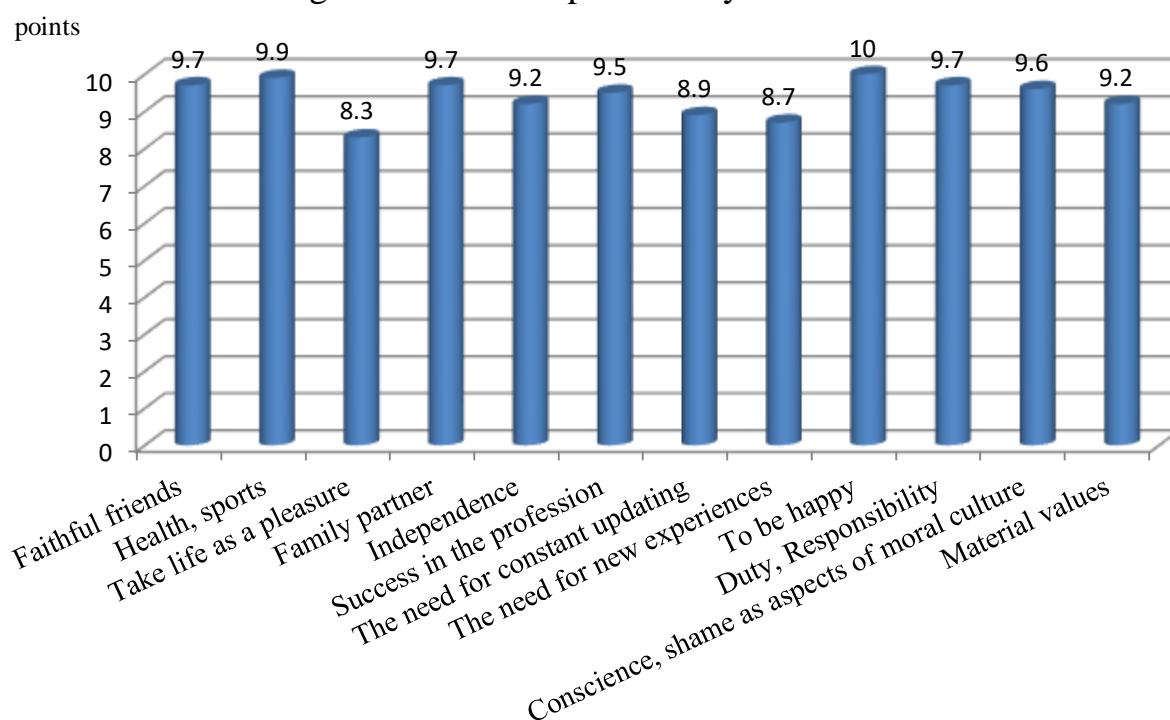


Figure 4 shows students' answers to the question "What is important to you in life?" As you can see from the diagram, students dream of happiness, health, family, loyal partner and friends, and success in the profession. For them, conscience, shame, duty, and responsibility are important. They have developed a need for constant updating of knowledge. Among students studying foreign language literature and culture, there is a re-evaluation of values. Independence, duty, responsibility, conscience, and shame as aspects of moral culture come first.

Figur 4: What is important to you in life?



In addition to the answers indicated in the questionnaire, some students (93 people, 62.4%) noted their concern about environmental problems in Kazakhstan and the world, as well as their desire to live in peace with other peoples - (132 people, 85.9%), students also noted (72 people, 48.3%) that they would like to live in a society without corruption, because it destroys their values.

V. Discussion of the results

The selection of answers for our questionnaire was determined on the basis of long-term observation by experts of an experimental group of students over five semesters. The questions and answers of the questionnaire were influenced by both the traditional values of Kazakhstani society and the values relevant to the world community in the era of globalization. The discussion in the classroom of the problems raised by the authors of works of art read in a foreign language allows us to determine the sphere of students' interests and their value priorities.

The problems of modern youth, its moral and social priorities are becoming the subject of research by scientists in different countries. For example, the Schell Study carried out in Germany systematically since 1953, and is the basis for long-term planning of socio-economic measures to support youth and prevent social tensions. This study allows the government and society to study not only the current priorities of young people, but also determines the direction in youth social policy. In Germany, the Shell study was led by Professor Matthias Albert. It was found that German youth values academic education. For most young people, good friends, a loyal partner, and family life are the most important values. For many young people, moral values are very important. However, a certain part of the youth is focused on material values and self-affirmation. [The 18th Shell Youth Study; Young people speak up;]

In 2019, 2572 young people aged 12 to 25 years participated in the Schell Study. The majority of young people are rather positive about the future. Young people are tolerant and socially liberal. They are most afraid of environmental degradation. [Shell, 2019] 21

Today, youth and its life priorities are given great attention in all countries of the world. The British Council, the UN and other international organizations are conducting research to determine the value priorities of modern youth. [2016 in review; What do young people... ; Future? Ask youth!]

The British Council conducted studies in many countries in which young people aged 18-35 years old who spoke English at IELTS 6 took part. A high level of English proficiency suggests that these young people belong to the educated elite of society. Twelve countries participated in this study (Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan, Kenya, India, the UK, Egypt, Mexico, Morocco, Tunisia, Canada, Poland). The survey participants were to answer the question: "Which major global issue is of the biggest concern to you?" The youth from different countries of the world who took part in the survey named the following priority problems - the opportunity to get an education, get knowledge and do business, corruption, education for women, poverty, environment, human rights and health. [Future leaders connect]

VI. Conclusion

We focused our analysis on the value orientations of young people studying a foreign language and culture in Kazakhstan. We found that this problem is relevant for many developing countries. The study of the influence of English language and literature on students' personal priorities is currently one of the important directions in the study of various aspects of the cultural identity of the individual in many countries of the world.

The personal priorities of students studying English, literature, and culture have become a new problem created by globalization. Globalization and international integration in all spheres of life make modern youth face the need to adopt certain cultural and legal norms, rules of behavior, and value orientations that are relevant to society and to themselves.

A foreign language, primarily English as a language of interethnic communication, is currently strengthening its position in Kazakhstan's society, causing just concerns about its negative impact on young people, the loss of national identity by young people, and adherence to foreign culture and other people's moral values. Students who study English in higher education institutions are most directly affected by foreign (Anglo-American) cultural and moral values. The task of the state and society is to preserve the national identity of young people, forming their stable personal priorities.

The results of our research show that Foreign language literature and culture enrich students, generate empathy, contribute to the emergence of new ideas, and form a new model of behavior in a globalized world.

Our research has shown that the study of foreign language literature and culture is inevitably accompanied by positive changes in students' self-esteem, giving them new knowledge about the world and new feelings.

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