

KAZ 101 wk2d1: Kazakh Vowels and Vowel Harmony

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Classroom management notes: *Today's lesson involves extensive pairwork and a standing class activity. Upon entering the classroom, the teachers should ask students to move their chairs to the outer sides of the classroom to make some space in the middle of the room.*

Description and justification: This is a fully fleshed out lesson plan designed to introduce Kazakh vowels and the concept of vowel harmony to beginner learners of Kazakh. As a Turkic language, Kazakh places great importance on palatal (or backness) harmony in its vowel system, allowing most native Kazakh words to contain only front (soft) vowels or back (strong) vowels (McCollum & Chen, 2021). Intelligible production and listening discrimination skills, along with a foundational knowledge of vowel harmony, should be achieved before learners can begin applying beginner syntactical features such as suffixes (which change depending on the preceding vowels).

The activities themselves are based on a range of beginner-friendly language learning methods. The pathfinding handout and minimal pairs activities are inspired by **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**, in which students are tasked to work together in the target language on some sort of task in order to reach a relevant, meaningful goal (Long, 2014). In this lesson plan, communication, opportunities for noticing, and meaningful language use are emphasized. The Quizlet activity utilizes features of **Total Physical Response (TPR)**, an approach which centers motor learning and physical movement so that learners may create stronger cognitive associations between linguistic concepts and their physical self (Asher, 1969).

	Content/Activity	Time
A – Description of Class	University Students between the ages of 18-24. 15 students; 9 women, 6 men, all undergraduate university students with varying majors.	
Levels	All are taking KAZ 101 (Beginner Kazakh 1) as an elective language course at QQQ University in the US. All students are complete beginners; 2 students have studied Russian to a novice level, 4 can read Cyrillic to a degree, and 1 has learned Turkish in the past to a novice-low level. The class takes place from 1:30 to 2:20 pm (50 minutes) on Mondays and Wednesdays. Students participate well during class, but many are a bit tired because the class comes right after their lunchtime. Some students don't eat lunch before class. These factors affect concentration.	
B – Recent work	In Week 1 day 1 , the instructor gave a brief lecture to students on an introduction to Kazakhstan as a country, along with the Kazakh language. In Week 1 day 2 , the instructor introduced Kazakh's unique Cyrillic-based alphabet and focused activities on practicing the letters that are the same or similar to their English counterparts (Ә Қ М С Т).	
C – Aims and Outcomes	2024F KAZ 101 – Week 2 Day 1 – 11/27/2024 1:30pm~2:20pm Aims: - Students will review and practice the use of previously learned Kazakh consonants Ә Қ М С Т.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will learn about the Kazakh vowels а ә е и о ө ұ ү у ы і, and practice them in multiple modes including reading, speaking, and listening, and writing. - Students will gain awareness of the meaning, function, and importance of vowel harmony in Kazakh. <p>Outcomes: Students Will Be Able To...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recall and apply the previously-studied Kazakh consonants б, к, м, с, and т. - Define the concept of vowel harmony and explain how it applies to the correct use of grammatical suffixes in Kazakh. - Produce all vowel sounds used in Kazakh <u>in an intelligible manner</u>. - Match vowels with their correct version of a suffix according to the rules of Kazakh vowel harmony. 	
D – Preparation	<p>Preparation time of approximately 15 minutes; teacher must prepare by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - printing out the pathfinding handout and (if they'd like) the answer key; - Setting up the slides and Quizlet activity on the computer and display board; - Possibly rearranging desks to allow space in center of the room for Quizlet activity. 	~15 minutes
E – Contents	<p>1. Review and Warmup:</p> <p>(a) Context: Brief review of concepts learned last week will help prime students to apply them in the following activities. Specifically, the teacher will reiterate the linguistic family that Kazakh is in (a Turkic language) and the pronunciation of the Kazakh consonants б к м с т.</p> <p>(b) Activity and class organization: The teacher will display slides on the board and review the main ideas of last week's lessons. The teacher will encourage students to take brief notes, especially on pronunciation, so they can be applied in future activities.</p> <p>(c) Aids: Teacher needs a computer/flashdrive and projector. Students optionally can use a pen and paper (or device) to take notes.</p> <p>(d) Language: Lesson is taught in English with natural uses of Kazakh scattered about to demonstrate pronunciation. The consonants б к м с т will be focused on, + unpredictable language.</p> <p>(e) Possible Problems: Moving too quickly through this warmup may make it difficult for students to remember and correctly apply the pronunciation of especially б and с,</p>	~5 minutes

	<p>given their slight visual differences from English spelling. Students will be encouraged to ask questions if needed, and instances of unintelligible pronunciation will be explicitly treated by the instructor during future activities.</p> <p>2. Activity 1 (Vowels and Vowel Harmony lecture):</p> <p>(a) Context: The teacher will introduce students to all vowels used in Kazakh, along with the rule of harmony that dictates their use in grammatical suffixes.</p> <p>(b) Activity and class organization: The teacher will use slides to provide a brief lecture on the pronunciation of Kazakh vowels а ә е и о ө ұ ү ы і. The lecture will first focus on vowels that are familiar (а ә е и о ү і) and then unfamiliar (ө ұ ү ы). The lecture will then introduce the concept of vowel harmony and further organize the vowels into soft vowels (і е ү ө ә) and strong vowels (ы а ұ о ү и). </p> <p>(c) Aids: Teacher needs a computer/flashdrive and projector. Students should have a pen and paper (or device) to take notes. Handwritten notes are recommended if students do not have/can't use a Kazakh keyboard.</p> <p>(d) Language: Lesson is taught in English with natural uses of Kazakh scattered about to demonstrate pronunciation. The vowels а ә е и о ө ұ ү ы і will be focused on, + unpredictable language.</p> <p>(e) Possible Problems: Unfamiliar vowel sounds and spelling system may be difficult for students to grasp at first, which may require the teacher to extend the amount of time on the lecture and give more examples. Students will be encouraged to ask questions if needed, and instances of incorrect pronunciation will be explicitly corrected by the instructor during future activities.</p>	~10 minutes
	<p>3. Activity 2 (Pathfinding handout):</p> <p>(a) Context: Students use their knowledge of Kazakh vowels and vowel harmony to find the correct pathway to one landmark in Kazakhstan. Students will work in pairs to do this activity; desks/chairs should be oriented accordingly at the start of class if the chairs cannot be moved during the activity.</p> <p>(b) Activity and class organization: The teacher will ask students to get together in pairs, and the teacher may directly pair students if they seem hesitant to group together. If the number of students is odd, one student may join a pair to create a group of 3. The teacher will hand out the printed path-finding worksheet as students pair up. The teacher will display the handout on the board and explain the instructions to the student, then provide an example of how one would move down the board. Students will be</p>	~10 minutes

	<p>given ~10 minutes to solve their path, and should be instructed to raise their hands when they are finished so that the teacher can check their answer. Finished students should take turned reading aloud each suffix on their path to receive instant, individualized feedback on their pronunciation.</p> <p>(c) Aids: Teacher needs a computer/flashdrive and projector, and 1 copy of the Pathfinding handout for every 2 students, with additional copies made for groups who finish early. The teacher can use the teacher's key to quickly check the students' work. Students need a pen, pencil, marker, or highlighter to track their path on the handout.</p> <p>(d) Language: Students may use English (or other shared languages) to communicate with each other during the activity, and should be encouraged to practice and give feedback to each other's pronunciation when practicing the Kazakh vowels and suffixes on the handout.</p> <p>(e) Possible Problems: Unfamiliarity with the new vowels may lead to repeated incorrect pronunciation or hesitancy; the teacher should be moving around the room during the activity to correct any pronunciation issues as they occur. The activity may be too difficult to finish in 10 minutes, but this should be remedied slightly through pair work. The activity may be too easy, taking much less time than 10 minutes; in this case, the teacher may prepare extra handouts to be given to pairs that finish early, while encouraging them to pay special attention to the pronunciation of all the vowels and their relationship to each other as they move down the path. If students still have extra time, they could alternatively be asked to do some brief research in pairs on the landmarks they landed on.</p> <p>4. Activity 3 (Quizlet quick reading):</p> <p>(a) Context: Students apply their understanding of Kazakh vowel harmony to categorize words by vowel type (soft vs. strong). This activity will reinforce their speed in identifying vowels and help them build fluency in recognizing soft and strong vowels quickly. Students will form a line in the center of the room, so desks/chairs will need to be moved to make space.</p> <p>(b) Activity and class organization: The teacher will ask students to stand and form a single line in the middle of the classroom, facing the board. If desks are in the way, the teacher will ask students to move the desk to create room. Real Kazakh words will be displayed on the board one at a time using Quizlet. Students will be instructed not to worry too much about the spelling of the whole word, but to just</p>	<p>~12 minutes</p>
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	<p>focus on the first vowel(s); the teacher should still read the word aloud to provide listening exposure. Students will step forward one at a time and quickly decide if the word displayed contains soft vowels or strong vowels. If it contains soft vowels, they will indicate with their arm to the left; if it contains strong vowels, they will point their arm to the right. The teacher will respond using Quizlet's flashcard function, which allows cards to be sorted into two piles (see example here). The teacher should emphasize that this decision must be made rapidly; if the teacher determines that a student is taking too long, or they chose the incorrect side, they are "out" and must sit down. If the student is correct, they will move to the back of the cycling line. The activity continues until all words are used or only one student remains standing. At the end of the activity, students will be asked to move the desks back to their original positions.</p> <p>(c) Aids: The teacher needs a computer/flashdrive, projector, and the accompanying Quizlet desk to display words on the board. Students need no materials.</p> <p>(d) Language: The teacher will use English for instructions and Kazakh to pronounce the words on the board. Students may use English (or other shared languages) and Kazakh to communicate with each other during the activity, but should not interrupt each other's turn at the board.</p> <p>(e) Possible Problems: Students may hesitate, feeling pressured to make quick decisions, which could slow down the activity. Students also may not have sufficient practice with the two vowel categories to have them memorized. In this case, the teacher can write a key on the whiteboard that students can reference if needed. Additionally, students with less confidence in vowel recognition may need to observe for a few rounds before participating actively. Students may find the activity too easy, meaning that no clear "winner" to the activity will arise. If the students find the activity too easy, the teacher should increase the speed or online processing complexity by counting down outloud or repeating the word. If the students find it too difficult to come up with fast answers, the teacher should reduce complexity and distractions by asking the rest of the class to quiet down, not reading the word out loud, and increasing the amount of time students have to think.</p> <p>5. Activity 4: (Minimal Pair Elimination):</p> <p>(a) Context: Students will practice their listening and writing skills in Kazakh by determining what word out of a minimal pair (in which only the vowel differs) is pronounced.</p>	<p>~8 minutes</p>
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	<p>Students will work in the same pairs as before, so desks/chairs should be oriented accordingly.</p> <p>(b) Activity and class organization: The teacher will ask students to get back into the same pairs that they were in for the pathfinding activity. The teacher will ask students to EACH prepare a notebook/blank piece of paper and pencil, and the teacher should provide scrap paper to students who don't have any paper. The teacher will ask students to write their and their partner's name at the top of their paper, then give the instructions for the activity. The teacher will display minimal pairs and their meanings in Kazakh on the slide and read aloud one of them (see example here). The teacher should read the word once, pause for students to think/write, then repeat it once more before moving onto the next word. Each student must individually write down the word that they heard. Repeat for 10 words. Then, the students will be instructed to compare their answers with their partner and see if there are any mismatches; the teacher should then go back to the first word, read out the correct answers one more time each, quickly, and students should work together on what they heard to write their final answers on one of the partner's sheet. This sheet will be turned in as an exit ticket at the end of class and returned, graded, at the start of next class. Remind students to make sure their names are at the top of the paper that will be turned in. The following words are the correct ones, to be read aloud by the teacher during the activity: 1. тұл; 2. төл; 3. қала; 4. жол; 5. құм; 6. бел; 7. қол; 8. әл; 9. ат; 10. күн.</p> <p>(c) Aids: Teacher needs a computer/flashdrive and projector. Students must have a pen and paper.</p> <p>(d) Language: The teacher will use English for instructions and Kazakh to pronounce the words on the board. Students may use English (or other shared languages) to communicate with each other during the activity, and should be encouraged to practice and give feedback to each other's pronunciation when practicing the Kazakh words that they chose.</p> <p>(e) Possible Problems: Students may not have had enough exposure to vowel sounds to pick out correct answers from pairs without context. In this case, the teacher can say something like "this pair contain the vowels 'ә' and 'ө'." Write down which word I am saying. Әл. Өл" to give students immediate examples of the two vowels involved. Students may have a hard time legibly writing the correct word if they aren't used to writing in cyrillic or if the activity moves too quickly. Students should be encouraged to speak up if the activity moves too fast, and after a few words, the</p>	
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	<p>teacher should check in and ask if she needs to go more slowly.</p> <p>6. Wrap-up:</p> <p>(a) Context: The teacher should wrap up the class and prepare everyone for the next lesson by summarizing the main ideas for the day (Kazakh vowels and vowel harmony), providing final thoughts or feedback, and briefly introduce the topic of the next class (more Kazakh consonants), along with introducing a survey for the day's class that students should take at home. The teacher should collect each pair's Minimal Pair final answer sheet before dismissing the class.</p> <p>(b) Activity and class organization: The teacher will summarize all the vowels learned today by displaying them on screen and reading them aloud one more time. The teacher should also briefly summarize the concept of vowel harmony and display all the vowels sorted into the two groups. The teacher will ask: <i>Do you have any other questions or concerns that we can answer for what we learned today, or for the next class?</i> The teacher will then direct students to where they can find the day's exit survey (a QR code to a Google Form), which should include questions such as <i>What is one new thing you learned today? How would you define 'vowel harmony' in your own words? How difficult was this topic for you? What feedback, dislikes, or suggestions do you have for the instructor regarding this topic?</i> Students can answer in English and may include some Kazakh. This feedback should be done outside of class, and must be completed before the next class.</p> <p>(c) Aids: Teacher needs a computer/flashdrive, projector, and a premade Google Form feedback survey. Students need their phones to access the survey.</p> <p>(d) Language: The teacher should use English to summarize materials and Kazakh to demonstrate the vowels learned during the class.</p> <p>(e) Possible Problems: There may be too little time to review all the concepts for the day—this may be cut and moved to the introduction of the following class to save time. Students may not have their phone on them or might not be able to access the form, in which case a few copies of a printed survey may be prepared.</p>	~5 minutes
F – Caveats and Options	<p>If the lecture and first two activities take longer than expected, or time must be made for class wrap up, the Minimal Pairs activity can be moved to week 2 day 2.</p> <p>Special care should be taken to gauge students' comfort with understanding the vowels and vowel harmony before moving on to listening discrimination; if the minimal pairs activity is introduced and students appear to be struggling, additional</p>	

	activities focused on phoneme analysis and description should be prepared before diving fully into listening discrimination and controlled practice.	
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Further reading:

Asher, J. J. (1969). The total physical response approach to second language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 53(1), 3-17.

Long, M. (2014). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.

McCollum, A. G., & Chen, S. (2021). Kazakh. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 51(2), 276-298.

Appendix:

The pathfinding handout for this activity can be accessed and downloaded through this public link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19n4XRD0KZ2e6KA9s5eBraYQcaj23r-W3/view?usp=sharing>.

The answer key for the pathfinding activity is as follows:

R117 = Mangilik El 2
M140 = Traditional yurt 2
B660 = Khan Shatyr 1
P095 = Mausoleum 1
T277 = Green Bazaar 2
H841 = Cathedral 1

The slides for this lesson, which contain an example/template for the minimal pair activity, can be accessed here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1mYIzE7hFX-qFY6VFNDuqffEgd0JKSyGDtBu9P-I7EnQ/e.dit?usp=sharing>.

The Quizlet used as an example/template for this activity can be viewed here:

<https://quizlet.com/967404794/kazakh-animals-wk2d1-flash-cards/?i=vryny&x=1jgt>.