

February 15, 2026

Dear Members of the Dissertation Review Committee:

I have functioned as a foreign supervisor for Karlygash Zhaksylykkyzy since 2020 on her project concerning types of bilingualism in Kazakhstan and the bilingual acquisition of a foreign language based on literary texts. As a scholar of literary and other cultural texts in the Russian language, with years of experience also working with Kazakh- and Kyrgyz-language texts, I was brought in to advise from a polylingual experience of analyzing cultural texts in languages such as English, Russian, and Kazakh. Moreover, I am trained in second-language acquisition theory, which I have employed in my two decades' experience of teaching Russian as a foreign language to English speakers. Over the last six years, I have been exceedingly impressed by Karlygash's impressive and important scholarship and, more specifically, her doctoral dissertation—which I am pleased to review in this letter.

Karlygash's doctoral dissertation, "Neurolinguistics of trilingualism: markers of lexico-semantic processing in cross-language interaction," is devoted to an interdisciplinary investigation of trilingual lexico-semantic processing in a mirror-image design involving Kazakh, Russian, and English. The work is positioned at the interface of psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and the cognitive neuroscience of language, and it addresses an increasingly important research problem: how do previously-acquired languages shape word recognition when the processing stream is triggered by a later-learned language L3?

A key strength of the dissertation lies in the research logic and experimental configuration. The candidate examines L3-triggered translation recognition under conditions designed to minimize reliance on overt form overlap and to isolate lexico-semantic processing. The selected language constellation is methodologically- and theoretically-informative: Kazakh, Russian, and English differ in typological profile and sociolinguistic status in Kazakhstan, allowing the dissertation to test established models of cross-language activation under a non-trivial multilingual setting. The dissertation thereby extends multilingual research beyond the better-studied Indo-European pairings and contributes evidence from an under-represented language combination.

The dissertation is based on substantial empirical work and employs a methodologically appropriate set of tools. Behavioural indices (accuracy and reaction time) are combined with electrophysiological measures derived from EEG, with specific emphasis on the N400 component as a time-sensitive marker of lexico-semantic processing and semantic mismatch. The methodological procedures are described in a systematic and transparent manner, including the

logic of stimulus control, experimental procedure, and the principles guiding ERP analysis. Such documentation supports the interpretability of the findings and enhances replicability.

Karlygash's research productivity and scholarly dissemination confirm the validity and maturity of the work. The main findings have been presented at academic meetings and published in peer-reviewed outlets, including an article in a Scopus-indexed journal (Q1), as well as publications in national journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and conference proceedings. Scientific publications based on the dissertation (as reported in the dissertation): Zhaksylykkyzy, K., Ibrayeva, Z. K., Kustubayeva, A. M., Roehm, D., & Zholdassova, M. (2026). Processing effects of L1/L2 from L3 in translation recognition paradigm: An exploratory ERP study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1710959; Zhaksylykkyzy, K., & Zholdassova, M. K. (2020). Тіл мен ми нейролингвистика аспектісінде [Language and the brain in the aspect of neurolinguistics]. *Наука и жизнь Казахстана*, (2), 222–232. Ibrayeva, Z. K., & Zhaksylykkyzy, K. (2021). The role of neurolinguistic research in the study of bilingualism. *Абай атындағы ҚазҰПУ Хабаршысы. «Филология ғылымдары» сериясы* [Bulletin of Abai KazNPU. Philology Series], 1(75), 67–73; Zhaksylykkyzy, K., & Nabiyeva, G. (2021). Современные методы психолингвистики и нейролингвистики в усвоении второго языка [Modern methods of psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics in second language acquisition]. *Вестник КазНУ. Серия филологическая* [KazNU Bulletin. Philology Series], 183(3) and others.

Throughout the preparation of the dissertation, Karlygash Zhaksylykkyzy has demonstrated independence as a researcher and competence in the contemporary scientific apparatus of linguistics and cognitive neuroscience. The candidate shows the ability to work critically with scholarly sources, formulate testable hypotheses, conduct controlled experimentation, and interpret behavioral and EEG/ERP evidence within a coherent theoretical framework. A particular merit of the dissertation is her successful mastery of specialized experimental and analytic procedures associated with EEG/ERP research, which require methodological discipline and technical expertise.

The dissertation makes a meaningful contribution to the development of neurolinguistic research in Kazakhstan by demonstrating the feasibility and scientific value of combining controlled experimental paradigms with electrophysiological measures in multilingual contexts. The work establishes a strong platform for subsequent research on multilingual lexical processing and for expanded experimental studies with larger samples and richer profiling of language history.

Beyond its immediate empirical findings, the dissertation also demonstrates a high level of theoretical integration. It does not simply apply existing bilingual models to a new population, but critically evaluates their scope under genuinely trilingual conditions and proposes a nuanced interpretive account that links learning history, typological distance, and experience-weighted activation pathways. In doing so, the work advances current debates on language non-selective access by showing how asymmetries in cross-language activation can be detected not only in behavioural measures but also in temporally fine-grained neural indices. The proposed distinction between more direct (“forked”) and relatively indirect (“roundabout”) access routes offers a conceptually productive framework that future research may further test, refine, and extend across other multilingual constellations.

On the basis of its relevance, methodological soundness, empirical results, and scholarly dissemination, I conclude that the dissertation meets the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational programme 8D02303 – Linguistics and should be recommended for defence.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. I may be reached at the e-mail address listed below.

Sincerely,



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