



## THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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**Annotation:** The article discusses measures to strengthen the status of the state language, alphabet reform, work related to the use of the language in the Republic of Kazakhstan on the basis of the planned language policy, education, and the media. The article also analyzes the issues of ensuring interethnic harmony through the “Trinity of Languages” project and strengthening the position of the Kazakh language in the context of globalization.

**Keywords:** Kazakhstan, language policy, state language, Kazakh language, Russian language, Latin alphabet, Law “On Languages”, “Trinity of Languages” project, language of education, language reform.

Each period has conducted a language policy based on the language situation that arose on the basis of its socio-political processes. This period includes the periods of globalization from the first years of independence. In 1989, the Kazakh SSR adopted the first law “On Languages” [“Закон Казахской Советской Социалистической Республики от 22 сентября 1989 года «О языках в Казахской ССР”] in the Kazakh SSR. It established the status of the state language for the Kazakh language, and the Russian language as the language of interethnic communication. At the same time, the law states that “the use and development of the languages of the national peoples living in the territory of the Kazakh SSR shall not be impeded.” In particular, the use of the Kazakh language in all spheres is established, and the right to free use of Russian and other local languages is also established. Citizens could address state organizations in a language convenient for them.

In the early years of independence, the language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan was implemented, aimed at developing the state language. Attention was also paid to local languages. An example of this is the establishment of the Language Committee of the Ministry of Culture and Information, the authorized body for the development and introduction of the state language. At the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev, the Presidential Fund for the Development of the State Language was established. Funds were allocated from the state budget for measures to develop the Kazakh language. [Amirkhamzin, A. O kazakhakh, o kazakhskom iazyke] So, the main goal of language policy in Kazakhstan was to ensure the wide-scale functioning of the state language, which is an important factor in strengthening national unity while preserving the languages of all ethnic groups living in the country.

**Alphabet reform:** After the country gained independence in the 90s of the last century, linguists and public figures began to express their opinions in the press on the issue of switching to Latin graphics. After that, for the first time in Kazakhstan, the issue of switching to the Latin alphabet of the Kazakh language was put up for public discussion. At this time, efforts to switch to the Latin alphabet began in neighboring countries Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Although the issue of the alphabet was put up for public discussion in the 90s, it was revisited many years later. In 2007, a working group of the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan prepared a reference document on the transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin script. [«On the transition of the Kazakh script to the Latin script»] It presents the philosophical and political aspect of the introduction of the Kazakh script based on the Latin script; the need for a transition to the Latin script and its main stages in linguistic terms; the economic issue of introducing the Kazakh alphabet based on the Latin script.

Head of State N. Nazarbayev emphasizes that the issue of the transition to the Latin script is one of the main issues that must be resolved in the “Kazakhstan-2050” strategy and that it is necessary to start from 2025. [«СТРАТЭГИЯ «Kazakhstan-2050»] After this address, the issue of the Latin alphabet occupies a central place in public discussion.

According to sources, the President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev emphasizes that “by the end of 2017, after consultations with scientists and representatives of the public, a single standard of the new Kazakh alphabet and graphics of the Latin script should be developed.” At the same time, it is determined that in the early days, the use of the Latin script will be combined with the Cyrillic script. [Kazakh-alphabet-to-Latin-script]

The use of the Latin script is explained by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Roman Vasilenko, as follows: “Changing the alphabet will allow Kazakhstanis to more easily integrate into the world community, since more than 90 percent of the world's scientific literature is published in Latin script. He also emphasizes that the status of the Russian language in the country will not be degraded in any way.” [Elnar-bainazarov/v-bukvarnom-smysle-perekhod-na-latinitcu-v-kazakhstane-zatianetsia] Thus, the transition to the Latin script in the country began to be carried out gradually.

**Language policy in business:** During this period, business was conducted in Kazakh and Russian. Article 4 of the Law “On Languages” stipulates that local languages on the territory of the Kazakh SSR shall be used in accordance with the procedure established by the resolution of the Council of People's Deputies along with the official state language and the language of interethnic communication. [Omirbekova M.Sh. and others. Language Policy in Kazakhstan] Thus, business in the country was conducted strictly in Kazakh, Russian, as well as local languages.

In 1993, the “Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan” was published, according to which the Russian language was freely used in business on an equal footing with the Kazakh language. The Law “On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan”

[<https://online.zakon.kz/Document>] adopted in 1997 establishes that the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kazakh) is the language of state administration, legislation, judicial proceedings and business, and that the state language is used in all spheres of social relations throughout the territory of the state.

In February 2001, the Government of Kazakhstan developed the State Program “On the Practical Use and Development of Languages in 2001–2010”. In accordance with it, the language project of the Government of Kazakhstan pursues three main goals: to strengthen and expand the role of the Kazakh language as the state language in social communication; to preserve the socio-cultural functions of the Russian language, as well as to develop the national languages of other indigenous peoples. [President of the Republic of Kazakhstan from 1



February 2001 L 550. On the State Program for the Development and Implementation of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2001-2010] After the approval of this program, the work on legal and regulatory documents in the Kazakh language has been improved. Free courses for representatives of the indigenous people have been organized.

In June 2011, the President of Kazakhstan signed the “State Program for the Development and Implementation of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020” [Президента Республики Казахстан. О Государственной программе развития и Функционирования языков в Республике Казахстан на 2011-2020]. The program is aimed at the development of local languages, ensuring the maximum development of the Kazakh language and further strengthening national unity. The main goal of the program is to increase the share of the adult population who know the state language to 95 percent by 2020; By 2020, the share of the adult population of the republic who knows Russian is to be increased to 90 percent; by 2020, the share of the population who knows English is to be increased to 20 percent; by 2020, the share of the population who knows three languages (state, Russian, and English) is to be increased to 15 percent. After independence, state programs developed to promote the state language in the country have led to an increase in the social functions and status of the Kazakh language.

**Language policy in education:** As is known, in the past, the language of instruction in general education schools was Russian. In the higher education system, especially in scientific and technical fields, the importance of the Russian language was high. Because at that time, the Kazakh version of scientific and technical terms had not been developed, and until the end of the 1980s, there were no Kazakh language courses in the curricula of higher educational institutions of the Kazakh USSR. As a result, among the intelligentsia of the Kazakh people, the Russian language served as a means of social communication and was actively used.

After the country gained independence, after firmly establishing the use of the Kazakh language as the state language in the spheres of state administration, starting from the 1998-1999 academic year, the textbook “Working in the State Language” began to be taught in higher and secondary specialized educational institutions. [Language Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan]

In 2007, N. Nazarbayev approved the “Trinity of Languages” project. The goal of the project was to enable the population of Kazakhstan to communicate in three languages, namely Kazakh, Russian, and English, and to inform the population about the era of globalization. The main language in this project was Kazakh. That is, the emphasis was placed on the use of the Kazakh language in socio-political spheres. In this way, as a result of the increased demand for the state language, the number of students studying in Kazakh began to equal the number of students studying in Russian. For example, as of 2009, 50.7 percent of university students studied in Russian, 47.6 percent in Kazakh, and 1.6 percent in English. [E. Suleymenova (2009). Essay on language policy and language situation in Kazakhstan.]

As a result of the language policy pursued in the country, the status of the Russian language in education has significantly decreased. For example, over the 20 years from 1989 to 2010, the number of students studying Russian and the number of Russian-language schools have sharply decreased. In 1989–1990, more than half of the students who received education studied Russian, while only 30.2 percent of students studied Kazakh. The situation will change in 2010. The number of schoolchildren studying Kazakh will reach 61.6%, while those studying Russian will make up only a third of the total number. The number of students has decreased



from 2,224,000 to 868,500 in 1989–1990. In 2009–2010, the number of Russian-language schools will decrease from 5,200 to 1,473. [A. Arefyev. Russian language at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries] E. Arefyev compiled the following table of the level of Kazakh and Russian language education of students in secondary schools in the country [A. Arefyev, source cited].

Til	1989-1990	1999-2000	2009-2010
Rus tili	64,7%	44,1%	34,5%
Qozoq tili	30,2%	52,1%	61,1%

The data presented show that the importance of the Kazakh language as a language of education in the country has increased positively.

The studies note that President N. Nazarbayev proposed to develop the trinity of languages - the Kazakh language, support the Russian language and study the English language. In particular, the “Roadmap for the Development of Trilingual Education in 2015-2020” was adopted, which stipulates the use of Kazakh, Russian and German languages in Kazakhstan. [Yuy Khaidzhu. Modern Position of the Russian Language in the States of Central Asia] The organization of such projects in the republic will lead to the expansion of the social functions of the Kazakh language and its active use in various fields.

Language policy in the press: Although practical work is being carried out in the country on the active use of the Kazakh language in various fields, the widespread use of the Russian language in the country will also directly lead to its active use in mass media. Among the Central Asian republics, the use of the Kazakh language in the media was low compared to other countries. For example, in Kazakhstan, according to 1989 data, only 28.6 percent of the total circulation of newspapers was published in the title language, while in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan this figure ranged from 50.9 to 93 percent. [T. Telebayeva, cited source]. This means that the Kazakh language was not actively used in the media in the country. 2/3 of the books, magazines and newspapers published in the republic were published in Russian, and 1/3 in Kazakh. After the state gained independence, as a result of measures taken to ensure the active use of the Kazakh language in all areas of public life, the Kazakh language began to be actively used in the media.

Thus, the Kazakh state conducted a language policy in the pre-independence period, under the influence of internal and external socio-political processes. After the country gained independence, the status of the Kazakh language as the state language was further strengthened and its active use in various fields was achieved. As a result, the Kazakh language became a multifunctional language. An impartial language policy was pursued in the country in relation to all languages.

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