

Sociological study of the language situation in Kazakhstan (on the data of Asana city)Oleg Evgenyevich Komarov¹, Zhaksybay Tursunovich Sarbalayev², Rishat Zhurkenovich Saurbayev¹¹Pavlodar State Pedagogical Institute, Mira Street, 60, Pavlodar, 140000, Kazakhstan²Pavlodar State University named after S. Toraygyrov, Lomova Street, 64, Pavlodar, 140008, Kazakhstan

Abstract. After the acquisition of sovereignty in the post-Soviet republics, a very different socio-economic, demographic and linguistic situation was formed. The uniqueness of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a vast territory inhabited by over a hundred nations and ethnic groups, at the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union the titular nation was the minority – only 40 percent of the general population. It should be noted that almost 85% of the Kazakhstan population spoke Russian fluently, which at that time was the language of interethnic communication of the Soviet Union, while in the neighboring republics of Central Asia the state-forming ethnic groups had historically dominated, and the number of the Russian population was not so significant as in Kazakhstan – 37.4 %. Kazakhstani sociolinguistics in the Soviet times had been actively developing questions of the Russian language functioning in Kazakhstan as a means of international communication. However, by definition of Altynbekova O. B., a major gap has emerged in defining the place and role of the Russian language studies of social-linguistic, psycho-linguistic and ethno-linguistic character. During a period of more than 20 years a new generation grew up in Kazakhstan, who are oriented at other values, different from those of the Soviet period, and which contribute to the formation of a new language situation. Among main ways, methods and techniques of influencing the functioning of society languages, the language policy occupies the most prominent place and is an important factor in shaping and changing the language situation both in specific regions and in the country as a whole. Since the Republic represents a multi-ethnic society, it is important to consider the possible types of language policy in a multinational state. In this article, the language situation on the example of the state's capital Astana is analyzed as a mini reflection of a multicultural society.

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Introduction

During recent decades linguists and sociologists have paid particularly active attention to the functioning and implementation of the language policy. Revivals of sociolinguistic researches at such times when society gives a kind of social request for linguists, sociologists, the realization of which is the part of programme of the country introduced for the social development, lifting its economy, culture, language and general literacy of the population. One of the important problems of modern science is to study the condition and development of the society, to consider patterns of development of the social formation, to introduce innovative ways of social development.

In modern social science there are many definitions of "the language policy". Schweitzer A.D. considered the language policy as a deliberate effect on the functional aspect of the language and to a certain extent on its structure by means of a system of measures implemented by the state which are the part of the general policy and correspond to its objectives [1]. Modern researchers give a more specific wording and define the language policy as a linguistic aspect of a public policy regarding the national question [2]. Mechkovskaya N.B. defines the language policy as a

type of deliberate society activities aimed at regulating the use of language [3]. In addition to the phrase "the language policy", the Soviet social science uses the close term "language building" [4, 5, 6]. In the foreign science it is common to use the term language planning and language variation [7, 8, 9, 10, 11].

Current national language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is focused on the implementation of the project "Trinity of languages", which includes the development of Kazakh as the state language, Russian as a language of international communication and English as the language of successful integration into the global economy.

Functioning of the Kazakh language as the official language of the country differs by the growth of national consciousness of native speakers of this language, the growing interest of other ethnic groups to the state language, their tolerant attitude towards the language policy conducted in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Kazakh language has become a means of expression and conservation of national statehood, further development of the ideological, spiritual and cultural unity of the people.

It is necessary to ensure the functioning of the Russian language as the official language used in

government organizations and local government, functioning of the Russian language in such fields as science, education, culture and media.

The question of teaching English at the present stage is relevant, so it is necessary to create conditions for learning English by all citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Language policy issues are focused on not only by government agencies but are also fully supported by the civil society, educational institutions and research centers, thereby forming a tradition of social partnership.

Optimal solution to language problems is the main factor for stabilizing international relations, strengthening of social cohesion and preserving the social consensus. The main strategic direction of administration is to create a tolerant language environment as a factor of unity of the people of Kazakhstan.

The linguistic situation may be the subject of sociological analysis from a methodological point of view as the language can be considered as a social process, since linguistic processes express the changes taking place in modern society. An institutional approach reveals the importance of a balanced language policy defined by the leading value of language as a social institution formation of spiritual culture and ethnic identity of the peoples of Kazakhstan.

Thus, social studies allow to receive prompt and reliable data on the current trends, problems and peculiarities of the state and other languages in different socio-demographic groups, as well as to make management decisions based on science-based recommendations on the implementation of the state language policy that largely contributes to the promotion of tolerance and inter-ethnic harmony.

In accordance with what was commissioned by the Office of language development of Astana sociological group (supervisor – Oleg Komarov, PhD in Sociology, Professor) in November 2012, a social study was conducted in the capital of Kazakhstan – Astana.

The object of research – adult (over 18 years) population of the city of Astana.

The subject of the study was the language situation in the city of Astana.

The purpose of research – the study of the language situation in the city of Astana, the definition of the level of development and a field of application of the state, Russian and other languages, assessment of Astana ethnic groups' sociolinguistic needs, identifying prospects for the development of languages in Astana.

The study was conducted based on an integrated approach and the general scientific

principles of cognition, such as objectivity, unity of theoretical and applied analysis, logical analysis, disclosure of the general and particular in the development of the research subject, system, determinism, verification and reliability of the results.

The total number of a sample (selection) is 1000 residents of the city of Astana (over 18 years), which was formed in the following manner: respondents were interviewed on a certain route in every third apartment in an odd apartment building or in every third house in the private sector.

The structure of the sample represents the respondents by gender, ethnicity and age. The representatives of various professions and social status were interviewed: workers, builders, office workers, civil servants, doctors and health workers, school teachers and students of higher and secondary education, shop assistants and workers engaged in services, entrepreneurs, unemployed, pensioners and others.

The results of the study

1. Degree of knowledge of the official language by the population of Astana and the percentage of the population that speaks the state, Russian and English languages

The most important indicator, which allows to describe the real picture of the language situation in the city of Astana, is the Kazakh language proficiency of the citizens, the state status of which is defined in the Constitution.

As can be seen from Table 1, in general, the residents of the city of Astana have high language proficiency.

Table 1. The level of the official language proficiency of the population of Astana (Percentage of respondents)

	All in general	Kazakhs	Russians	Other nationalities
don't know	0.2	–	7.5	3.0
understand, but cannot explain myself	22.9	10.6	53.3	50.1
understand, can explain myself	20.1	20.4	20.3	16.7
speaking, but don't know the written language	20.9	23.3	13.2	21.1
fluently speak, read, prepare documentation (know the written language)	34.2	45.7	5.7	9.1

Thus, the population of the city of Astana, who know the state language (if you add up those who are fluent in reading, preparing documentation, say that does not know the written language, as well as those who understand and can explain themselves) is 75.2%.

The percentage of the population of non-Kazakhs who speak the state language (if you add up those who fluently speak, read, prepare documentation; say that do not know the written language, as well as those who understand and can explain themselves) is among Russians – 39.2%, and among other nationalities – 46.9%.

Also, if you add up those who fluently speak, read, prepare documentation; say that do not know the written language, as well as those who understand and can explain themselves, the percentage of the population who speak Russian, was 85.8% and the percentage of the English speaking population, – 37% (see Picture 1).



Picture 1. Percentage of the population of the city of Astana, who speaks the state, Russian and English languages (Percentage of respondents)

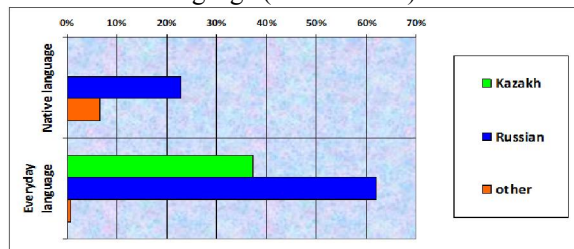
2. The role of the state and Russian languages in the social and communicative system of Astana

The language situation existing to the present moment favours the peaceful coexistence of the state and Russian languages in the social and communicative system of Astana (see Table 2).

Table 2. The role of the state and Russian languages in the social and communicative system of Astana city (Percentage of respondents)

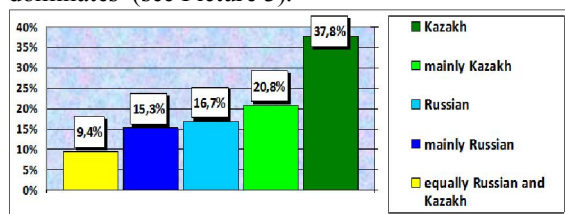
	in Kazakh	in Russian	in both languages	in English	in other
at home, with family members	39.8	34.7	24.1	0.4	0.1
with relatives	42.1	32.1	24.6	0.4	0.1
with friends	33.2	45.6	20.0	1.2	—
with neighbours	33.8	38.7	27.3	0.1	0.1
with co-workers	40.2	39.3	18.3	1.7	0.5
at school	49.7	40.3	7.7	2.3	—
in a shop, in a market	56.7	25.4	17.2	0.4	0.3
in transport	54.5	20.4	24.4	0.4	0.3
outdoors	34.7	37.3	27.0	0.4	0.6

The Russian language plays an important role as a spoken language in the social and communicative system of the city of Astana, despite the fact that for the majority of residents (70.7%) the native language is the Kazakh language (see Picture 2).



Picture 2 – The status of the native and spoken languages in the socio-communicative system of Astana (Percentage of respondents)

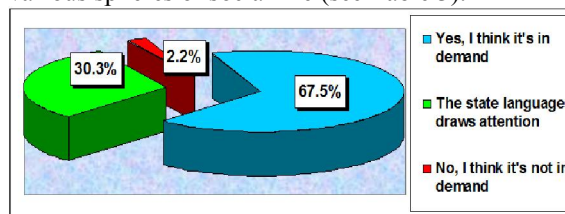
However, in proceedings of the various institutions of the city of Astana, where citizens study, work or apply to the Kazakh language currently dominates (see Picture 3).



Picture 3. The respondents' answers to the question: "What languages are used in proceedings of institutions where you study, work, apply to?" (Percentage of respondents)

3. The level and the nature of social preferences regarding the use of languages in various spheres of life

According to the majority of respondents, the state language is in demand in main spheres of social life (see Picture 4), being more socially preferred in various spheres of social life (see Table 3).



Picture 4 – Answers to the question: "Is the official language in demand in key areas of public life?" (Percentage of respondents)

Table 3. The respondents' answers to the question: "What language is used in key areas of public life?" (Percentage of respondents)

	state			Russian		
	often	sometimes	never	often	sometimes	never
in state power and management	72.7	27.3	—	50.6	37.6	11.8
in education	57.3	42.7	—	54.3	43.7	2.0
in science	57.2	42.8	—	56.4	42.1	1.5
in healthcare	57.0	43.0	—	63.4	34.2	2.4
in culture	56.3	43.7	—	58.9	41.1	—
in art	56.8	43.2	—	57.7	41.2	1.1
in transport	67.6	32.4	—	40.5	59.5	—
in IT	34.4	65.6	—	80.9	19.1	—
in telecommunications	40.8	59.2	—	78.7	21.3	—
in reference and information service	56.7	43.3	—	59.8	40.2	—
in trade	70.8	29.2	—	45.7	54.3	—
in community service	45.6	54.4	—	58.7	41.3	—
at the place of work (study)	67.7	32.3	—	63.2	36.8	—
on TV	38.7	61.3	—	72.3	27.7	—
on radio	36.7	63.3	—	67.3	32.7	—
in newspapers	32.9	67.1	—	67.6	32.4	—

4. The nature of the socio-linguistic preferences of the adult population regarding the issue of providing basic secondary or higher education to children

Regarding the issue of providing basic secondary or higher education to children in a particular language in the socio-linguistic preferences

of the adult population of the city of Astana the Kazakh language dominates, although Russian and English play an important role as well (see Table 4).

Table 4. Respondents' answers to the question: "A school, college, university with what language of tuition would you prefer to educate your children at?" (Percentage of respondents)

	with Kazakh	with Russian	with English	with other
school	82.3	21.7	7.6	1.9
college	81.7	27.1	6.5	1.1
university	75.6	32.3	8.5	1.2

According to the interviewed citizens, a choice of a school, college, university with the Kazakh language of tuition is primarily related to the cohesion of the future of their children with Kazakhstan (56.7%), as well as the fact that it has an impact on career development (36.7%). Less common judgments are those that the Kazakh language education allows to learn how to prepare documents (3.2%) and it gives you the opportunity to communicate in the Kazakh language (1.4%).

5. Degree of habituation by the population of Astana and the use of the state language in everyday life

Two-thirds of residents (66%) of Astana is already quite accustomed to using in the Kazakh language in everyday life and a fifth (19.9%) is gradually getting used to it (see Table 5).

Table 5. Respondents' answers to the question: "Are you used to using in the Kazakh language in everyday life?" (Percentage of respondents)

	all in general	Kazakhs	Russians	other nationalities
yes, quite used to	66.0	78.2	30.8	56.1
gradually getting used to	19.9	18.4	23.3	24.2
haven't got used to yet	10.6	3.4	30.4	19.7
no, not used to	3.5	–	15.5	–

However, the majority of respondents feel quite comfortable when the official language is used in various spheres of social life (see Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents' answers to the question: "Do you feel comfortable when the official language is used in various spheres of public life?" (Percentage of respondents)

	all in general	Kazakhs	Russians	other nationalities
comfortable	35.5	47.7	3.5	15.2
very comfortable	46.1	50.8	20.3	84.8
not comfortable	12.4	1.4	50.2	–
very uncomfortable	2.8	–	12.3	–
indifferent	3.2	0.1	13.7	–

Due to lack of knowledge or ignorance of the state language citizens mainly face problems such as restrictions in promotions – 48.2%, difficulties in employment – 22.2% and difficulties in communication – 19.7% (see Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents' answers to the question: "What are the problems you faced due to lack of knowledge of the Kazakh language?" (Percentage of respondents)

	all in general	Kazakhs	Russians	other nationalities
difficulties in employment	22.2	18.5	30.4	33.3
restrictions in promotions	48.2	48.7	45.8	51.5
difficulties in receiving education	9.9	9.2	10.6	15.2
difficulties in communication	19.7	23.6	13.2	–

6. Exercise of the constitutional right of every resident of the city of Astana to use their native language for implementation of the free choice of the language of communication, tuition and creativity

As shown in the Table 8, in general, all the conditions in Astana are created for the exercise of the constitutional right of every citizen to use their native language, for the exercise of the free choice of the language of communication, tuition and creativity. At the same time, the constitutional right to exercise the free choice of language learning is more fully implemented, and less implemented for exercising the free choice of language creativity.

Table 8. Answers to the question: "To what extent the constitutional right of every citizen of the city of Astana is implemented?" (Percentage of respondents)

	fully implemented	partially implemented	not implemented
for using the native language	74.0	23.8	2.2
for exercising the free choice of the language of communication	73.5	24.3	2.2
for exercising the free choice of the language of tuition	83.3	14.5	2.2
for exercising the free choice of the language of creativity	67.4	30.4	2.2

7. Linguistic requests of ethnic groups living in Astana

Currently linguistic demands of ethnic groups living in the city of Astana, with all the understanding of the importance of the Kazakh language, are far more focused on the products of the mass media in Russian (see Table 9).

Table 9. The level of demand for the products of the mass media in the Kazakh and Russian languages in the national section of the respondents (Percentage of respondents).

	in Kazakh				in Russian				in both languages			
	all in general	Kazakh	Russians	others	all in general	Kazakh	Russians	others	all in general	Kazakh	Russians	others
books	32.3	45.2	1.3	–	33.6	36.5	94.7	95.5	14.1	18.3	4.0	4.5
newspapers	32.3	45.2	1.3	–	33.0	35.6	94.7	95.5	14.7	19.1	4.0	4.5
TV	24.5	33.4	2.2	7.6	53.2	37.9	95.6	71.2	22.3	28.7	2.6	21.2
radio	27.3	35.2	6.6	13.6	50.1	37.5	85.0	65.2	22.6	27.3	8.3	21.2

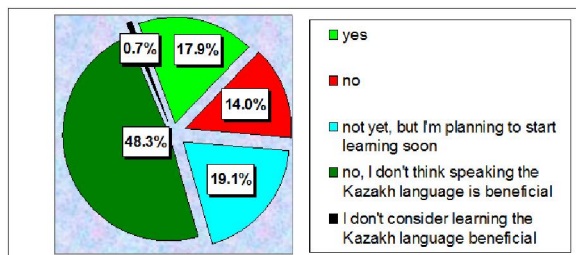
High and persistent public demand for the products of the Kazakh national media market can be explained by the expansion of the scope of application of the state language and its language acquisition by the general public as the Kazakhs and by non-indigenous persons.

Along with this, it is also important to meet the linguistic and specific requests from other ethnic groups (Germans, Tatars, Ukrainians, Koreans, Poles, Chechens, Ingushes, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Jews, and others). Since the vast majority of them would like to learn their native language at training courses in Sunday schools (regularly – 51.5 %, not regularly – 45.5%).

8. Identifying the degree of personal motivation of residents of Astana in learning the state language, the problems and probabilistic solutions

Mastering the state language is not only the duty and responsibility of every citizen of Kazakhstan, but also an incentive to the personal competitiveness and active participation in public life. This is a key priority, the main factor of spiritual and national unity of the people of Kazakhstan.

Currently, about half (48.3%) of those polled speak the state language, the other half is aware of the need and the prospect of learning the Kazakh language for a better performance of their professional duties and for professional growth. So 17.9% is currently studying the state language and 19.1% is going to begin to study it soon (see Picture 5).



Picture 5. Respondents' answers to the question: "Are you currently studying the Kazakh language?" (Percentage of respondents)

From the number of those surveyed: attend language courses of the Kazakh language – 10.2%; learn independently – 8.9% and learn with a tutor – 3.8%.

The main motives for learning the state language for all surveyed residents of the city of Astana in the study are as follows:

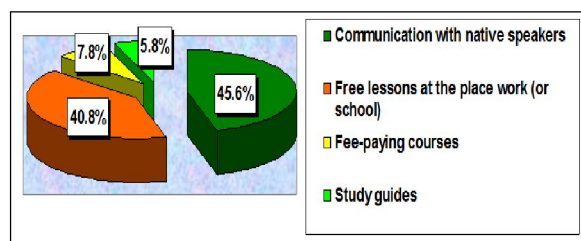
- Native language – 64.5%;
- The intention to live in Kazakhstan – 17.9%;
- Language skills are necessary for a career – 16.5%;

- The desire to learn a few languages – 8.7%;
- The need for language integration – 7.8%;
- Civic duty – 6.3%;
- Are forced to learn the language – 3.8%.

While learning the Kazakh language citizens face such problems as:

- Lack of study guides for learning the language – 23.4%;
- Lack of qualified teachers – 18.8%;
- Lack of time – 16.6 %;
- Lack of desire and persistence – 14.5%;
- Lack of language environment – 6.7%;
- Cannot be combined with working (studying) to learn the language – 6.5%;
- Lack of capacity – 3.3%;
- Age limit – 1.2%.

As shown in the Picture 6, according to residents of the city of Astana, the most effective forms of learning the Kazakh language are to communicate with native speakers – 45.6% and free lessons at the place of work (or school) – 40.8%.



Picture 6 – The most effective forms of learning the Kazakh language (Percentage of respondents)

The percentage of the adult population engaged in the state language courses at workplace is 37.2% (attends regularly – 24.5% and irregularly – 13.2%). At the same time, 30.6 % of respondents noted the absence of free language training at the place of work (study).

From those who were taking the Kazakh language courses, about a quarter of respondents (27.8%) noted that they have received some results. Also, after taking language courses: 25.4% – are able to speak and read; 25.3% – understand speech and 16.5 % – are able to prepare the documents.

As probabilistic solutions to problems in learning the state language citizens have noted the need to have study guides. So more than half the residents want to have them, including:

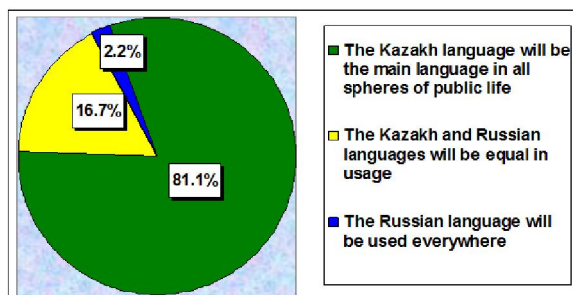
- paper and electronic study guides – 40.5%;
- electronic study guides (CDs with training programmes) – 18.9%;
- paper study guides (books, brochures, etc.) – 10.7%.

The necessity for publishing study guides confirms the fact that only 29.9% of the respondents

indicated their uselessness (26.7% – because they speak the Kazakh language fluently and only 3.2% – since they are not going to learn the Kazakh language).

9. Prospects of languages development in Astana

The country's citizens approve the state policy concerning the functioning and development of languages. With regard to the prospects of development of languages in Astana, the vast majority (81.1%) of respondents have said that the Kazakh language will be the main language in all spheres of public life. According to a prognosis by 16.7% of the surveyed citizens, in the coming years such language environment will be established that the Kazakh and Russian languages will be equal in usage in the Kazakh society. A small percentage of citizens (2.2%) was identified, suggesting that in the future the Russian language will be used everywhere, despite the official status of the Kazakh language (see Picture 7).



Picture 7. Respondents' answers to the question: "How do you assess the prospects of development of languages in Astana?" (Percentage of respondents)

Using the results of the study, recommendations were developed to facilitate the creation of optimal conditions for the qualitative improvement of the language situation in the city of Astana, the formation of an optimal language environment, improvement of the mechanisms for the implementation of the state language policy, improvement of the competitiveness of the Kazakh language as the official language of the country.

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