

LANGUAGE POLICY AND IDEOLOGY IN KAZAKHSTAN: ETHNIC RUSSIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE STATE LANGUAGE USE

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ABSTRACT

After the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan began to build its own language policy. It was necessary to raise the status of the Kazakh language and at the same time maintain ethnopolitical and social stability. When determining the main priorities of language policy, one of the most difficult factors influencing this process was to take into account the ethnic and linguistic needs of the population. It is the language that is one of the most important factors of national identity. This study analyzes the attitude of ethnic Russians to the use of the state language and linguistic ideology in Kazakhstan. The study is aimed at identifying the attitude of ethnic Russians to the use of the state language in social communications and in the choice of education. In the context of ideology, the article uses the term «kazakhization», which was introduced in previous studies on linguistic ideology in Kazakhstan. Key research questions: how do Russians feel about the language ideology in Kazakhstan? How do they relate to the choice of education (teaching instruction) and what are the problems in social communication in Kazakhstan? A questionnaire survey was used as the main tool for collecting data for the research project. The research results showed that ethnic Russian respondents have a neutral attitude to the ideology of the Kazakh language.

Key words: Language Policy, Language Ideology, National Identity, Ethnos, Social Communications.

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Қазақстандағы идеология және тіл саясаты: мемлекеттік тілді қолданысқа енгізуге этникалық орыстардың көзқарасы

Аңдатпа. КСРО ыдырағаннан кейін Қазақстан өзінің тіл саясатын жүргізе бастады. Қазақ тілінің мәртебесін көтеру және этносаяси, әлеуметтік тұрақтылықты сақтау қажет болды. Тіл саясатының негізгі басымдықтарын айқындау кезінде осы процеске әсер ететін ең күрделі факторлардың бірі халықтың этностық және тілдік қажеттіліктерін ескеру болды. Тіл ұлттық бірегейліктің аса маңызды факторларының бірі болып табылады. Бұл зерттеуде этникалық орыстардың Қазақстанда мемлекеттік тіл мен тіл идеологиясын қолдануға қатынасы талданды. Зерттеу этникалық орыстардың мемлекеттік тілді әлеуметтік коммуникацияларда және білім беруді таңдауда қолдануға қатынасын анықтауға бағытталған. Идеология контекстінде, мақалада Қазақстандағы тілдік идеология бойынша алдыңғы зерттеу-

лерде енгізілген «қазақиландыру» термині қолданылды. Негізгі зерттеу сұрақтары: орыстар Қазақстандағы тілдік идеологияға қалай қарайды? Олар білім беру бойынша таңдау жасауға (оқыту нұсқаулығы) қалай қарайды және Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік қарым-қатынаста қандай мәселелер бар? Зерттеу жобасы аясында деректерді жинау үшін негізгі құрал ретінде сауалнама қолданылды. Зерттеу нәтижелері этникалық орыс респонденттерінің қазақ тілі идеологиясына бейтарап қатысы бар екенін көрсетті

Түйін сөздер: тіл саясаты, тіл идеологиясы, ұлттық бірегейлік, этнос, әлеуметтік коммуникациялар

Языковая политика и идеология в Казахстане: отношение этнических русских к использованию государственного языка

Аннотация. После распада СССР Казахстан начал строить собственную языковую политику. Необходимо было поднять статус казахского языка и при этом сохранить этнополитическую и социальную стабильность. При определении основных приоритетов языковой политики, одним из самых сложных факторов, влияющих на этот процесс было учесть этнические и языковые потребности населения. Именно язык является одним из важнейших факторов национальной идентичности. В данном исследовании анализируется отношение этнических русских к использованию государственного языка и языковой идеологии в Казахстане. Исследование направлено на выявление отношения этнических русских к использованию государственного языка в социальных коммуникациях и в выборе образования. В контексте идеологии в статье используется термин «казахизация», который был введен в предыдущих исследованиях по языковой идеологии в Казахстане. Основные исследовательские вопросы: как относятся русские к языковой идеологии в Казахстане? Как они относятся к выбору образования (инструкция обучения) и какие есть проблемы при социальном общении в Казахстане? Для сбора данных в рамках исследовательского проекта был использован анкетный опрос в качестве основного инструмента. Результаты исследования показали, что этнические русские респонденты имеют нейтральное отношение к идеологии казахского языка.

Ключевые слова: языковая политика, языковая идеология, национальная идентичность, этнос, социальные коммуникации.

Introduction

The intensive Kazakh language revitalization process is named as “kazakhization” after the country’s independence by most Central Asian researchers [1-3]. In this study the term “kazakhization” regarded as ideology. The term language ideology can be defined as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” [4. p. 57]. Also, Rumsey [5, p. 12-13] identifies language ideology as “shared bodies of common-sense notions” where one language can be regarded as appropriate rather than the others. As De Jong interpreted language ideology as “what is and is not acceptable language and language use...” [5, p. 13]. In this study language ideology assists to describe the common feelings and attitudes

of ethnically Russians towards the Kazakh language ideology within the “kazakhization” [1-3], [6-7] or “kazakhification” process [8]. Thus, this study will analyze how minority ethnic Russians think about the state language ideology in social life. The study investigated only ethnic Russians beliefs because before independence they were majority and dominant language owners in Kazakhstan. Also, it is better to control one ethnicity beliefs and attitudes towards Kazakh language ideology within this small-scale research. The following paragraph analyses past research results to construct current research problem.

Earlier several studies had been carried out in order to regulate interethnic relationships and language attitudes. For instance, 1995-96 three surveys were conducted by a team of sociologists in the 5 main cities of Kazakhstan [9, p. 153]. They showed that

most ethnic Russians actively discourage the Kazakh language use. Vast majority of Russian respondents of the survey recognized themselves as the citizens of ex-Soviet Union or present Russian Federation whereas only few ethnic Russians identified themselves as the citizens of Kazakhstan. Equally on the basis of the investigation Olcott pointed out that the result of the poll which was conducted by Kazakhstan's Parliament Information Analysis Center in 1998 displayed that approximately 46 % of the country's Russian population regarded that their motherland was former Soviet Union [8]. Later, Nurseitova, Smagulova and Suleimenova conducted large-scale survey [7, p. 461]. The findings were collected from November 2005 till February 2007 measuring language attitudes, competence and performance [1]. The results of their survey stated that language use and attitudes towards the Kazakh language use tend to be more negative among minority ethnicities of Kazakhstan and that is why this study investigates current attitudes of ethnic Russians living in Nur-Sultan.

This exceptional diversity in Kazakhstan territory was very challenging issue in nation building. That is why from the beginning of the independence the state authorities understand that language is one of the major factors in national identity. National identity is "the subjective state of a sense of belonging, as a group phenomenon, in which the members of a group "identify" with one another" [10, p. 17]. In order to identify themselves people use different tools such as language, religion and culture. In that point, language plays an important role in the process of ethnic identification. Other authors consider language as an index, symbol or marker of ethnicity and culture [11]. As result of nation building process most researchers [1-3], [7] noted appearance of two opposing language ideologies in Kazakhstan society. About the existing language ideologies Smagulova mentioned in her paper "Multiplicities of language ideologies" [1]. The first is multilingualism and the second is monolingualism, "Russification" and "Kazakhization". Kazakhiza-

tion can be understood as the Kazakhstan's government policy and ideology to structure the national identity of Kazakhs and to raise the status of the titular language [1-3], [7]. Also, this policy shows the ideological language planning of Kazakh government. Webb interpreted the ideological language planning as the constituting belief, attitude and patterns by the hegemonic group [12]. It reflects to Kazakhstan as the government established the Kazakh language as the ascendant to set up new ethnic relations and nation building process in a young independent country [3].

The purpose of our research is to analyze ethnically Russians' attitudes towards the Kazakh language ideology. This study can identify ethnic Russians' attitudes towards the national language use in social communication and in educational choice.

We will focus ethnic Russians' attitudes about kazakhization ideology and the use of Kazakh in social communication and in educational choice. This study attempted to answer to the following research question:

What are the attitudes of Russian ethnicity towards the Kazakh language ideology?

What are their attitudes towards educational choice and social communication?

This study design is quantitative survey which replicates past empirical longitudinal survey design as it lasted nearly for two years [1]. It helps us to understand current opinions and general attitudes about the state language ideology. Descriptive statistics analyzed four sets of attitudinal items such as attitudes on learning the Kazakh language, attitudes on use Kazakh language for social interaction, attitudes on evaluation of Kazakh language ideology and attitudes on Kazakh language policy evaluation. Sets of attitudes were designed on the basis of the study of McCormick [13] on the evaluation attitudes and perceptions of Ontario workers about community economic development process. His example of grouping attitudes helped us to synthesize attitudes and revealed clear findings.

For data collection of our research project, we used questionnaires as our main

tool. We consider that questionnaire can help us to explore and study the attitudes of Russian ethnicity toward the Kazakh language ideology and use in Kazakhstan. As a rule, in small-scale research non-probability sampling can be appropriate [14, p. 155] specifically saying, convenience sampling method. It gives a researcher easy access to the researching sites because a researcher may know some people from the sites or she or he worked before [15, p.36] and it is not time. Similarly, we have chosen two universities and two Russian companies because some of us studied and worked in those universities; and in Nur-Sultan's two Russian companies' divisions there were some specialists whom we know before the study. In addition, convenience sampling method could save our time and money because we did not travel long time in looking for appropriate researching sites.

We prefer to develop our own questionnaire with specific items and based on the principles of the survey methodology. Before conducting our questionnaires, we did a piloting test to the content of questionnaire with several peer ethnically Russians cohorts for the accuracy and relevancy of the questionnaires. Hornberger's [16] and Smagulova's [1] empirical studies were the foundations in creating the questionnaire items for this study. For instance, Hornberger asks about motives and attitudes that direct them "to focus much on the acquisition of Spanish and minimizing their attention to the Quechua language". In the questionnaire there were some items too about Russians' attitudes which are used to identify the reasons for using and learning the state language (see Tables A in appendix). For data analysis the study used descriptive statistics. In the study descriptive statistics measured descriptively four sets of attitudinal items at a basic level [14]. As it was shown in the Figure C in the appendix C, it gave us attitudinal trends of frequencies and percentages of the Kazakh language ideology and use among the forty Russian respondents. Creation of bar charts could graphically present variations of attitudes within the four sets. And

the research could identify ethnic Russians common beliefs about the national language use in social communication and educational choice in Nur-Sultan sites. The main limitation for further analysis was small sample size as we mentioned above. That is why, the study could not do cross-tabulations and central tendency analysis within descriptive statistics.

Results

The findings of the study show the results of responses among Russian employers and students. The attitudes of Kazakhstani ethnically Russians toward state language use in our small-scale survey research are presented in this section. According to the features of questions, we grouped a set of attitudes: attitudes to learn the Kazakh language, attitudes toward use of Kazakh in social interaction, attitudes toward evaluation of Kazakh language ideology and policy. Generally, in accordance with the set of attitudes we could know how ethnically Russians in Nur-Sultan support and understand the Kazakh language ideology.

These set of attitudes were investigated by analyzing frequencies of responses from the questionnaires. The first set of attitudes include questions such as "do you currently wish to learn the Kazakh language?", "would you like to speak Kazakh fluently?", "did you learn the Kazakh language earlier?", "what do you think about your current Kazakh language proficiency level?", "can you mention the most significant reason for learning the state language?" and "do you recommend your children to learn the national language of Kazakhstan?". The second set of attitudes contain the questions such as "do you usually use the Kazakh language in daily conversation?", and "if you get an official response (orally/ written) in the Kazakh language, how do you react in such situation?". The third set of attitudes entail two items: "how do you evaluate the development of the Kazakh language in Kazakhstan?", and "the knowledge of state language is very important to integrate in the Kazakhstani society". The fourth set of attitudes involve questions such as

'how does the Kazakh language policy impact on your life in Kazakhstan?' and "what is your attitude towards teaching History of Kazakhstan and Geography in Kazakh soon in all Russian medium schools in Kazakhstan?"

The findings, which are generated from the analysis of frequency and percentage of response scores in the descriptive statistics, revealed the more neutral attitudes towards the Kazakh language ideology of ethnically Russian respondents in Nur-Sultan (Figure 1). For the first set of attitudes toward learning the Kazakh language, this study shows that 57 percent of ethnically Russians learn Kazakh because it is the national language of Kazakhstan, and 35 percent of respondents learn Kazakh for living in Kazakhstan. However, only few people (2,5 %) feel the necessity of learning Kazakh for career success and the same number people feel that they are forced to learn Kazakh. Moreover, the most Russians (85 %) prefer to send their children to Russian medium schools and encourage them to learn Kazakh as a school subject. Also, it is interesting to note that nearly all of them (92 %) have learned Kazakh as a subject at schools. But in another item about the Kazakh language proficiency level, we identified that nearly one third of respondents (30%) do not know Kazakh language at all; nevertheless, slightly more than 32 percent of them understand the Kazakh language but they find it difficult to speak. Only 37 percent of ethnically Russians have low Kazakh proficiency out of 40 respondents. In the following item it was clearly seen that approximately half of the

respondents (47 %) wish to speak fluently and learn Kazakh at present. Other 40 % feel less need to learn the Kazakh language taking neutral positions.

The second set of attitudes of ethnically Russians toward the use of Kazakh language for social interaction shows that slightly more than half of ethnically Russians (67 %) who live in Nur-Sultan rarely speak Kazakh in daily conversations. In most cases, Kazakhstani ethnically Russians do not receive official responses in the Kazakh language whilst 40 percent of them received responses in Kazakh. As a result, they need help for translating or interpreting the meanings in such situations. For the third set of attitudes findings shows that the vast majority of respondents (47 % strongly agree and 35 % agree) believe that the Kazakh language is important for them to integrate into Kazakhstani society. Also, the large numbers of ethnically Russians (67 %) pointed out that the Kazakh language is developing and predicted that it will have favorable future as well (Figures 2).

The frequencies and percentages of the fourth set of attitudes reveal negative and neutral attitudes of Russian ethnicities toward teaching "History of Kazakhstan and Geography" in Kazakh at Russian mainstream schools. The halves of them (50 %) absolutely disagreed of teaching "History of Kazakhstan and Geography" in the Kazakh language; slightly less half of people (40 %) hold neutral positions about this educational language policy. Moreover, almost all Russian ethnicities (90 %) in the survey did not feel any influences of language policy on their lives (Figures 3).

Figure 1
Attitudes of ethnically Russians on learning the Kazakh language

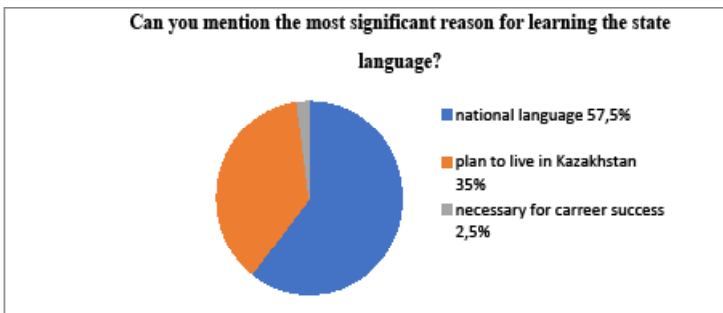


Figure 2
Attitudes of ethnically Russians on the Kazakh language ideology



Figure 2. Pie-chart about attitudes of ethnically Russians on Kazakh language ideology about the role of Kazakh for integrating Kazakhstani society

Figure 3
Attitudes of ethnically Russians on the Kazakh language policy



Figure 3. Pie-chart about ethnically Russians attitude toward teaching History of Kazakhstan and Geography in Kazakh in all Russian medium schools in Kazakhstan

Discussion

This study provides the analysis of the present attitudes of the ethnically Russians toward Kazakh language use and Kazakh language ideology. Findings of the study indicate that ethnic Russian respondents have neutral attitudes about the Kazakh language ideology. Generally, they understand the importance of learning Kazakh language and they encourage their children to learn Kazakh. However, they do not want their children to study the History of Kazakhstan and Geography in the Kazakh language because as we assume they do not have enough academic Kazakh language proficiency. Also, this study reveals that Russian ethnicity does not feel any language pressure in their social com-

munication. It means that both Kazakh and Russian equally exist in the official social communication. The study highlights that language ideology does not stress ethnically Russians who live in Nur-Sultan to use Kazakh actively in their social interactions in various spheres of their lives. This is akin to the point of Dave [17, p. 112], he states that people who do not know the state language can easily find jobs in major economic sectors such as industry, banking, transport and communication in Kazakhstan. Hence, the domination of Russian speaker in social domains lessens the need to learn or use Kazakh for ethnically Russians.

The attitudes of Russian ethnicity toward social communication and education choice climes as neutral because, on the

one hand, they believe that it is important to learn and use the state language, but on the other hand they are not ready to learn History of Kazakhstan and Geography in the Kazakh language. They don't completely accept new language reforms yet.

However, descriptive statistics within small-sized respondents (40) we could find out positive changes in common feelings and attitudes of ethnically Russians, who live in Nur-Sultan city, toward the Kazakh language ideology and the state language use. As the obtained data are very small the study cannot generalize them to all ethnically Russians living in Nur-Sultan or to other Russians who live in other parts of Kazakhstan. Overall, the study presents that ethnically Russians accept the state language ideology. They admit the legal position of the Kazakh language and attempt to learn the Kazakh language.

It is interesting to compare these data with the results of the survey conducted by J. Smagulova [1, p.462] eight years ago. According to that data, 48.4% of Russian ethnicity don't speak Kazakh and 36 % - with difficulty. In our survey, 30% of Russian ethnicity do not know Kazakh language at all; nevertheless, slightly more than 32 percent of them understand the Kazakh language but they find it difficult to speak. The comparison shows a little change of attitudes toward the Kazakh language. However, another data demonstrates that the attitude to use Kazakh is changed. Smagulova [1, p.465] presents that only 0.6% of ethnically Russians use Kazakh and in comparison with this results 67% of them rarely speak Kazakh in everyday conversations. But in our research, it is a small-scale research which conducted only in Nur-Sultan, thus the results can't be compared completely. Also, the findings show that all Russian ethnicity learnt Kazakh at schools before, but they can't speak. It also reveals the real quality of teaching the Kazakh language in Russian medium schools.

In general, more people reported a preference for learning Kazakh because of the promoting language policy. While

respondents of Kazakhstani ethnically Russians show the interest in Kazakh; however, they are not ready to exclude Russian, because it gives educational, economical, and informational opportunities.

Conclusion

The results of this study highlight the neutral attitudes toward Kazakh language ideology and state language use of ethnically Russian respondents in Nur-Sultan. They do understand the importance of the Kazakh language, and they encourage their children to learn Kazakh as a subject at schools. However, as for the educational choice of certain subjects which are clearly mentioned in the educational policy, that is, to teach History of Kazakhstan and Geography in the state language- Kazakh, vast majority of them showed negative attitude that they don't want their children to learn these subjects in Kazakh. Regarding the social interaction, they do not encounter language problem of low Kazakh competence, as we ascertain that Kazakh and Russian coexist in the official communication. Further research is needed to study general attitudes of Russian ethnicity toward Kazakh language use across all regions in Kazakhstan.

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