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## LANGUAGE IDENTIFICATION PROCESSES OF THE YOUTH

**Abstract.** The article deals with the role of the Russian language in the processes of language identification of students. The article presents the results of the sociolinguistic survey, the main objectives of which were determined based on the need to obtain information on the following aspects of the language situation: the degree of knowledge of the youth of the state, Russian and other languages; the level and nature of social preferences in relation to the use of languages in various spheres of life; the nature of social and language preferences of the young population. The review of theoretical works of Kazakhstan and foreign scientists on this subject is given. The conclusions of the study noted the significant role of the Russian language in the formation of linguistic identity, which is due not only to historical realities, in particular, the language policy conducted for a long time, as well as the conscious choice of language. The conducted studies prove that language proficiency and its use are a factor of socialization of young people and determine the style of human interaction with their social environment.

**Key words:** language, Russian language, language identity, youth, Republic of Kazakhstan

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## ЖАСТАРДЫҢ ТІЛДІК СӘЙКЕСТЕНДІРУ ПРОЦЕСТЕРІ

**Аннотация.** Мақалада жастардың тілдік сәйкестендіру процестеріндегі орыс тілінің рөлі қарастырылады. Әлеуметтік-лингвистикалық сауалнаманың нәтижелері келтірілген, оның негізгі міндеттері тілдік жағдайдың мынадай аспектілері туралы ақпарат алу қажеттілігіне негізделі отырып анықталған: жастардың мемлекеттік, орыс және басқа тілдерді меңгеру дәрежесі; өмірдің әртүрлі салаларында тілдерді пайдалануға қатысты әлеуметтік артықшылықтардың деңгейі мен сипаты; жас халықтың әлеуметтік және тілдік қалауларының сипаты. Осы тақырып бойынша қазақстандық және шетелдік ғалымдардың теориялық жұмыстарына шолу жасалды. Зерттеу нәтижелері тарихи шындыққа ғана емес, ұзақ уақыт бойы жүргізіліп келе жатқан тіл саясатына, сондай-ақ тілді саналы таңдауға байланысты орыс тілінің тілдік тұлғаны қалыптастырудағы маңызды рөлін атап өтті. Жүргізілген зерттеулер тілді білу және оны қолдану жастардың әлеуметтенуінің факторы болып табылатындығын және адамның әлеуметтік ортамен өзара әрекеттесу стилін анықтайтындығын дәлелдейді.

**Тірек сөздер:** тіл, орыс тілі, тілдік бірегейлік, жастар, Қазақстан Республикасы.

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### ПРОЦЕССЫ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ИДЕНТИФИКАЦИИ МОЛОДЕЖИ

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается роль русского языка в процессах языковой идентификации учащихся. Приведены результаты социолингвистического опроса, основные задачи которого были определены исходя из необходимости получения информации о следующих аспектах языковой ситуации: степень владения молодежью государственным, русским и другими языками; уровень и характер социальных предпочтений в отношении использования языков в различных сферах жизни; характер социальных и языковых предпочтений молодого населения. Дан обзор теоретических работ казахстанских и зарубежных ученых по этой теме. В выводах исследования отмечена значительная роль русского языка в формировании языковой личности, что обусловлено не только историческими реалиями, в частности проводимой на протяжении длительного времени языковой политикой, а также сознательным выбором языка. Проведенные исследования доказывают, что владение языком и его использование являются фактором социализации молодежи и определяют стиль взаимодействия человека с его социальной средой.

**Ключевые слова:** язык, русский язык, языковая идентичность, молодежь, Республика Казахстан.

#### Introduction

As a multi-ethnic country, Kazakhstan is committed to creating conditions for tolerant communication: from the first steps of state-building, the Law on languages was given a multicultural orientation. Noting the need to expand the social functions of the Kazakh language as the state language, the Law on languages and the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan provide for the development of other languages of the people of Kazakhstan: Russian, which is the language of official use in the Republic of Kazakhstan and retains the status of the language of international communication used as a means of interaction with other peoples and cultures in the post-Soviet space; other languages – as a means of national identification and preservation of national and cultural characteristics, traditions of all peoples of Kazakhstan.

The preservation of the original cultures of all the peoples living in our country in the context of globalization is becoming a necessary condition for maintaining social consolidation. One of the components that have a powerful impact on the preservation, maintenance and development of cultures of all nationalities is language.

Consequently, language planning and language policy in multinational countries, including Kazakhstan, should be carried out in parallel with the provision of inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony, civil unity: maintaining the status of the title language to develop and support the languages of other nationalities. This is an important condition for the development of Kazakhstan, the implementation of strategic objectives of socio-economic and political modernization of the country.

In modern Kazakhstan, the key role of young people as a special social group in the implementation of the above tasks is becoming increasingly obvious. “Having consolidated

the achievements of 20 years of independence, Kazakhstan intends to confidently move towards the goal of becoming one of the 30 developed countries of the world in the third decade of the XXI century. In these circumstances, a great hope and responsibility are placed on young people, who will continue creative affairs of the older generation, raise the bar of national competitiveness even higher, ensure Kazakhstan's prosperity and world recognition in the XXI century" (1). Indeed, it is the modern young people of Kazakhstan – a generation that differs from other groups of the population by the level of health, intellectual activity and mobility. And the processes taking place among today's youth are integral to the more general social problems of Kazakhstan's society. It cultivates a certain type of young man, while the youth itself determines the prospects for the development of society.

Student youth – a social group of a certain age, engaged in vocational training in secondary and higher education. It will have to take appropriate niches in the field of professional and managerial activities. Values and orientations of this category of young people are of theoretical and practical interest, characterize a certain socio-cultural section of society.

Student youth, being the most active part of modern society, is a particularly interesting group to study, because young people are in constant search of social roles, at the stage of formation of their own worldview, attitudes and interests. Of particular importance for young people is the possibility of self-expression and manifestation of their own individuality, on the one hand, and belonging to certain subcultures, on the other. The instrument of such self-identification is the language, which is also a tool for the realization of creative needs. (Kalashnikova A. A., Kalashnikov I. A., 2014).

### **Setting of the problem**

Like any post-Soviet state, Kazakhstan has experienced significant changes in the political, ideological and cultural content of education. Today it is difficult to find a monolingual personality, especially among young people and the younger generation. It is noteworthy that residents of the former USSR today due to political transformation, economic and social conditions, the establishment of state and ethnic identity of citizens in the CIS countries were given the opportunity to upgrade the role of national languages, to preserve Russian language as a language of international communication, science, culture, and actively explore other languages, and to enter the global arena.

“The ideologists of the Kazakh identity strategy focus on strengthening the ethnic component in civil society with the requirements of building the state on the basis of linguistic and ethno-cultural criteria through the assimilation of all groups of the population of the Kazakh culture and mastery of the Kazakh language. The Russians of Kazakhstan defend their rights to the recognition of the Russian language as an official language on an equal basis with the Kazakh language and some political rights, in particular, to the recognition of them as a special cultural and political influential group.

With Kazakhstan gaining independence, local Russians are forced to develop new identification strategies and a new attitude to the “Other” through the recognition of the Kazakh language as the main one. The tense nature of inter-group relations is also explained by the rethinking of the Russian identity. Rethinking means not only a new awareness of your own group (We), but also a reassessment of the image of another group (They). However, Russians remained convinced of the superiority of Russian culture and had a hard time accepting the fact that they are now being imposed another language in the same quality as their native language (Dressler W., 1999). This negative attitude is intensified by the decline in the status of Russians

in the post-Soviet period. Russians in Kazakhstan consider themselves the most affected by the collapse of the USSR. Being a socially and professionally dominant group for several generations, nowadays the Russians of Kazakhstan often experience psychological frustration due to the need to adapt to the new status of “minority” and “Diaspora”. Therefore, it is more difficult for Russians to perceive post-Soviet Kazakhstan as a new country” (Dzhumageldinov A.N. 2016). However, W. Dressler in another work emphasizes the following, “...the problems of intercultural coexistence have never been linguistic or cultural problems, but fundamentally political problems.” (Judt T., 2002) That is why modern ideologists of civil unity in Kazakhstan should not consider ethnic and cultural factors as an obstacle to the creation of common Kazakh identity.

During the years of independence, a new generation of young people has grown in Kazakhstan, focused on values other than in the Soviet period, participating in the formation of a new language situation. Nevertheless, most researchers recognize the fact that, although the state language in Kazakhstan is legally assigned the functions of the language of consolidation of the people of Kazakhstan, but de facto the Russian language, functioning in accordance with the legislation on an equal basis with the state language, still retains its position as a language of interethnic interaction.

In this regard, the article attempts to analyze the role of the Russian language in the processes of language identification of Kazakh youth.

### **Literary review**

As Guboglo M.N. writes.: “Any of the identities of a person is formed in the process of its complex, mutually intertwined and interdependent interactions with historically established institutions in this society, with the dominant ideology, with people with whom he enters into a variety of contacts – from economic to psychological, and from socio-political to family and household.” (Guboglo M.N., 2003). Indeed, the process of linguistic identification of youth of Kazakhstan takes place in accordance with historical and political realities, in particular, language policy.

In the works of Suleimenova E.D., linguistic identity is defined as “not attributed and innate, but interiorized property of a person, like any other identity, which can be chosen, expressed in language and socio-cultural behavior, or change depending on the social, political and ideological context” (Suleimenova E.D., 2010).

This definition echoes the opinion of Karaulov Yu.N.: “It is also noted that social, political and economic changes in society affect the choice of linguistic identities of a person at the moment of history (Karaulov Yu.N., 2006)”. Also, he writes that “On the one hand, the use of language affects the formation of group identity, and on the other – group identity affects the use of languages and setting them (Karaulov Yu. N., 2006)”.

Therefore, the creation of favorable conditions for the preservation and development of languages of all peoples of Kazakhstan, including the Russian language, is very important. People, regardless of their ethnic, religious affiliation, can be aware of themselves as citizens of a single country, if the life of their ethnic language and culture is adequately represented.

The loss of linguistic identity leads to the disruption of the translation of cultural experience, to the loss of many cultural meanings. Even W. von Humboldt, believed that much of the view of each person about the world was due to its language: “Each language describes around the people to which it belongs a circle from where the person can go only so far as he then comes into the circle of another language” (Humboldt, 1985) In the future, this idea got its

development in the writings of Sapir E., Whorf B.L., Benveniste E. and other scientists. Also, Humboldt notes that “Language is the united spiritual energy of the people, miraculously imprinted in certain sounds...” (Humboldt, 1985).

### **Methodology**

The subject of this article was chosen to analyze the current state of linguistic identity of modern youth of Kazakhstan, in particular, the study of the role of the Russian language in the formation of language identification. Since, as Bauman Z. explains, the problem of identity is one of the central themes and points of intersection of interests of different Sciences of man. And through identity the important features of modern life are considered” (Bauman Z., 2002).

On September 15-30, 2017, a sociolinguistic survey was conducted on the topic of the linguistic identity of the Kazakh youth, which provides for the identification of the linguistic characteristics of young people (knowledge of languages, use of languages, attitude to languages). The sample included students of 3-4 courses of the faculty of Philology and World languages of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The respondents were 30.5% of the 3rd year, 69.5% of the 4th year, 39.2% of men, 60.8% of women, including Kazakhs-60.8%, Russian – 35.2%, other nationalities – 4%. Age of respondents – 18-24 years. In total, 250 people were interviewed.

The main objectives of the study were determined based on the need to obtain information on the following aspects of the language situation: the level of knowledge of young people of the state, Russian and other languages; the level and nature of social preferences with regard to the use of languages in various spheres of life; the nature of socio-linguistic preferences of the young population.

But, since the article deals with the role of the Russian language in the processes of linguistic identification of young people, the data of the research characterizing this situation will be considered.

### **Results of the research: main results**

This study studied the issue of formation of language identity and the role of the Russian language in this process in the younger generation of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The analysis is based on the results of a sociolinguistic study carried out in Almaty in 2017 among students.

Linguistic identity of young people is considered through the formation of ethno-cultural identity and analyzed through the following indicators: “language as the main means of communication”, “mother tongue”, “language as a means of communication in a foreign cultural environment”, etc. The author also highlights the factors influencing the formation of positive ethno-cultural and linguistic identity.

According to the results of the study, the percentage of respondents who consider the native language: the Kazakh language – 57.2%, Russian – 40.8%, other languages – 2%.

The main language of communication is still Russian, although there is a tendency to reduce its use. So, 10% of respondents who chose Russian as their native language in their answers to the question “What language do you use at work / among friends?” indicated the Kazakh language.

But in general there is a such situation: 90% of respondents use Russian to work on the Internet, 72% use Russian in institutions, banks and 60% choose Russian to watch TV and listen to the radio. These results indicate a wide prevalence of the Russian language among

working and reading young people.

Respondents' answers to the question "What language do you prefer for education (for yourself, your children/grandchildren)? (several options could be noted)" are shown in the table 1.

Languages	% of all respondents
Kazakh	85,2
Russian	80,8
English	76,4
other language (write)	-
difficult to answer	0,8

**Table 1.** The question "What language do you prefer for education (for yourself, your children/grandchildren)? (several options could be noted)"

85.2 % of respondents indicated the Kazakh language, 80.8% – the Russian language, the English language was indicated by 76.4% of the respondents. These results show a significant role of the Russian language in the education of Kazakhstan, as well as the positive promotion of the policy of trilingual education, which is based on the Kazakh, Russian and English languages.

Students' answers to the question "Do you agree with the opinion that knowledge of this language is necessary?" are shown in the table 2.

Languages	agree	disagree	difficult to answer
Kazakh	241		9
Russian	232	6	12
English	232	2	16
Chinese	102	51	97
Arabic	73	145	32

**Table 2.** The question "Do you agree with the opinion that knowledge of this language is necessary?"

Data analysis shows that most students are willing to learn the second and third languages. 88% of respondents-Kazakhs agree that it is necessary to know Russian language, and 98% of the respondents-Russians believe that it is necessary to know the Kazakh language. Students understand the need for knowledge of the state and Russian languages, as well as learning foreign languages. For example, in addition to the state and Russian languages, 93% of all respondents consider it necessary to speak English, 41% of respondents express a desire to speak Chinese, and Arabic was popular in the responses of respondents.

Respondents were asked about their level of language proficiency (native and / or other). Russian language was marked by all respondents, regardless of nationality, as the language of communication. Russian is the main means of communication for all respondents of Russian nationality. For the rest of the respondents living in a specific linguistic environment, which influences the choice of language, Russian-Kazakh, Russian-Uzbek, etc. bilingualism and multilingualism is typical.

81% of the total number of respondents noted that "it is equally convenient to communicate with people in Kazakh and Russian languages". Also students answered the question about the degree of language proficiency in the following way: 92% of Kazakh respondents claim that they know Russian "well", 66% of Russian respondents indicate that they know Kazakh "well".

Based not only on the above figures, but also on the results of perennial sociolinguistic studies of Kazakhstani scientists (Suleimenova E.D., Altynbekova O.B., Akhmetzhanova Z.K., etc.), it is possible to say that the linguistic identification of the youth of Kazakhstan is formed due to the functioning, first of all, of Kazakh-Russian bilingualism, secondly, national-Kazakh-Russian multilingualism (Uzbek, Uygur, Turk, Kurd, Azeri, Tajik, Chechen, Kirghiz, Tatar, Dungan, Bashkir, etc.). It is important to note that in percentage terms in this multilingualism of different ethnic groups, Russian dominates (Shalgimbekova K.S., 2013).

### **Discussion of results**

In the process of globalization, all countries become interdependent. Therefore, we cannot develop without bilingual, multilingual and multicultural education. And in Kazakhstan, a unique policy of trilingualism is pursued, aimed at mastering three languages at once: Kazakh, Russian and English. The relevance of multilingualism has become apparent in Kazakhstan. The requirement of a multilingual policy is clear from the point of view of expanding the political, economic, scientific, and cultural relations of Kazakhstan with various countries of the world. And the Russian language plays an important role in the above processes.

It is well known that bilingualism generates interest in other languages and cultures, while maintaining a positive ethno-cultural and linguistic identity. Therefore, in order to preserve peace and in order to avoid interethnic conflicts in the multinational environment of Kazakhstani youth, it is necessary to preserve and develop the knowledge of the Russian language, which serves primarily as an instrument of communication and a symbol of the unity of many nationalities living peacefully in Kazakhstan.

It should be noted that the linguistic identity of bilingual students is an established personality, because they already speak a specific language, that is, their own language. But, mastering the second language, bilingual students are moving into a wider multilingual ethnocultural environment. And it is very important, at this stage, at the stage of transition to another multicultural space, to send the bilingual in the right direction. Of course, it is very difficult to influence the formation of the linguistic identity of today's bilingual student, but it is possible. However, as we see from the results of the sociolinguistic survey, student youth consciously approaches the choice of the Russian language, which is used in many areas of life.

Russian language for a long historical period was the dominant means of not only interethnic, but also intra-ethnic communication in the Republic, which was predetermined by the Soviet language policy and historically diverse ethnic composition of the population of the Republic. The study of language priorities within the framework of a different language policy and a different sociolinguistic paradigm, especially in the field of education, is a significant criterion of the effectiveness of the language policy implemented in the country, aimed primarily at the revival of the Kazakh language, as well as the preservation of the general cultural functions of the Russian language and the development of the languages of the peoples of Kazakhstan. The establishment of language preferences among students will contribute to the conscious language planning and more effective implementation of language policy, taking into account existing and emerging in the process of its implementation new directions and problems, will help to identify ways to regulate the language balance in the country (Shalgimbekova K. S., 2013).

Being formed in us in the process of socialization, language identity forms us as a person. It permeates all our being, but it is often not noticed by us, as we do not notice the air we breathe. But as soon as the composition of the air changes, we immediately focus on this and

try to understand the reasons for the changes. The same is true of linguistic identity, which manifests itself and becomes noticeable for us in the case when we are faced with another and – especially – alien. It seems that this is partly due to the fact that language identity has, in addition to communication, also symbolic nature. The latter is due to the fact that behind the signs exchanged by personality in the process of communication, there are always meanings that are open to their own and closed to others.

It follows from the above that the Russian language in the language processes of Kazakh youth, especially in the formation of linguistic identity plays a significant role, which is due not only to the appropriate ethnic composition of the population, but also the historical realities, in particular, the language policy conducted for a long time, including in the education system.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we would like to note that the Russian language plays a significant role in the linguistic processes of the Kazakh youth, especially in the formation of linguistic identity, which is due not only to historical realities, in particular, the language policy, conducted for a long time, including in the education system. Since knowledge of several languages in our globalizing world is considered a necessary skill, knowledge of Russian is an advantage of the youth of Kazakhstan and the ability to freely understand and speak one of the world languages, which is included in the list of official languages of the UN, the second most popular language on the Internet.

It should be noted that globalization processes observed in recent decades have made significant changes in the nature of the phenomenon of language identity. Intensive processes of mixing and blending of cultures make it urgent to preserve the diversity of languages. The proportion of people who consider themselves to be representatives of not one but two or more ethnic cultures, perceiving and/or using several languages as their native language is increasing. The increasing social mobility of the population makes such groups more numerous.

These changes in society can lead to linguistic identity. Any crisis of identity is its loss, which adversely affects the individual. That is why it is so important to prevent the crisis of linguistic identity. In this regard, the government of multinational and multi-confessional Kazakhstan should maintain and develop the existing balanced language policy: to develop and support all languages of the peoples of Kazakhstan along with the state language, including the language of international communication – Russian.

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