

Language Use and Language Policy in Central Asia

K. Aminov, V. Jensen, S. Juraev, I. Overland, D. Tyan, Y. Uulu

Abstract

This paper provides facts and figures on the prevailing language situation in Central Asia, along with an overview of the legal status of different languages and data on language use in various spheres of public life. The paper is divided into four sections: basic facts and figures, historical and legal overview; language use in different spheres; media/culture. Data are provided on all five countries of post-Soviet Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

I Basic figures

This section contains information on the following subjects: proficiency in different languages and individuals' language use; mother tongue self-identification; ethnic origin of population and possible discrepancies between ethnic origin (*nationalnost'*) and language use;¹ socio-economic indicators related to language use; language use related to age.

KAZAKHSTAN

Proficiency in different languages and individual language use

1. 50% of the population can speak Kazakh
88% of the population can speak Russian
2% of the population can speak English.²

¹ In accordance with local practice, the terms 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' are used interchangeably throughout the article. 'Nationality' should be understood in the Russian meaning *nationalnost'* and is not to be confused with citizenship.

² Round table with the participation of Gaziz Telebayev, Vice Minister of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan, http://www.azattyq.org/content/Kazakhstan_kazakh_language_bill_roundtable/1828028.html, (accessed 11 August 2010)

Language use and language policy in Central Asia

2. In a 2007 survey of public opinion carried out by the Association of Sociologists and Political Analysts of Kazakhstan in 17 cities of the country, respondents reported their language use as follows:³

Table 1.1 Primary language used by % of population for various purposes

	Kazakh	Russian	Other
Watching TV, reading newspapers	29	79	2
In public places	35	79	2
At work-places: companies, learning institutions	33	73	3
With friends	36	72	3
Within the family	44	60	6

3. According to an opinion poll carried out by *the* Department for the Development of Languages of the Ministry of Culture in 2004 in 14 regions, Astana and Almaty, the proportion of speakers speaking Kazakh fluently has evolved as follows in recent years:⁴

Table 1.2

	2000	2004
Percentage of pop. that speaks Kazakh fluently	36.4%	39.5%

Mother tongue self-identification

Percentage of respondents who consider their native language to be Kazakh or Russian:

Table 1.3

	2000	2004
Kazakh	51.9%	52.6%
Russian	37.3%	38.7%
Other languages	10.8%	8.7%

In 2004, the overwhelming majority (96.3%) of those of Kazakh ethnicity (nationalnost') reported Kazakh to be their mother tongue. Among those surveyed, 71.3% of Kazakh nationality reported that they could speak, read and write freely in Kazakh. The lowest knowledge of Kazakh is observed among Russians. In total, 26.9% of respondents of other nationalities reported that they could speak and read Kazakh fluently.⁵

Language use and geography

The highest levels of knowledge of Kazakh are found in the southern and western regions of the country, where Kazakhs constitute the majority. The lowest levels are observed in the central and northern regions, where much of the Russian population is concentrated.

³ Public Opinion Poll, 'Language situation in Kazakhstan,'

<<http://www.eurasianhome.org/xml/t/socials.xml?lang=ru&nic=socials&pid=26>> (accessed 8 October 2010)

⁴ Z. Shaukenova, Director of Institute of Comparative Social Research 'CESSI – Kazakhstan', 'Yazykovaya situaziya v Kazakhstane' (Language Situation in Kazakhstan) <<http://www.cessi.ru/index.php?id=169>> (accessed 8 October 2010)

⁵ Ibid.

Socio-economic indicators related to language use

Knowledge of one foreign language (English) in Kazakhstan increases the cost of a specialist by 20%, two or more languages by 35%.

Language use related to age

Senior citizens use more Kazakh for communication: those 65 years and older are least likely to use the Russian language. On the other hand, those in the age group 45 to 54 years demonstrate the lowest rates of use of Kazakh in all spheres. This group, whose youth and early professional careers coincided with the peak of the development of socialism in the USSR,⁶ has the most consistent users of Russian. Among the young respondents of Russian ethnicity aged 16 to 25 years, 69.7% of recorded a significantly higher level of knowledge of Kazakh language compared to Russians of the middle and older generations in 2006.⁷

KYRGYZSTAN

Ethnic origin and primary language

According to official Kyrgyz statistics, for the predominant majority of population the ethnic identity and primary language overlap.

Table 1.4⁸

Ethnic groups	% of total population	% of language users
Kyrgyz	70,9	71,4
Uzbek	14,3	14,4
Russian	7,8	9
Dungan	1	1
Other	5.8	4.2

Table 1.5 % of population that uses each language as a second language

Russian	34.50
Kyrgyz	4.10
Uzbek	1.50
English	0.50

⁶ Interview with the Director of Centre of Social and Political Research ‘Strategy’, G.Ileuova, *Expert Kazakhstan*, 10 (158), 10 March 2010.

⁷ Interview with the Chairman of the Committee for Languages of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan, Doctor of Philology, Professor Erden Kazhybek, Kazinform News Agency, <<http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/195335>> (accessed 8 October 2010)

⁸ Kyrgyz National Statistics Committee, *National Population Census 2009*, <<https://www.stat.kg>> (accessed 01 June 2010).

Considering both mother tongue and second language, an estimated 4,057,100 speak Kyrgyz (75.6%), 2,336,900 speak Russian (43.5%) and 854,400 speak Uzbek (15.9%).

Socio-economic and geographic indicators related to language use

Many parents deem it more important for their children have a good command of Russian than of the language they speak at home. Schools in Kyrgyzstan do not provide enough time or satisfactory methodology for children to learn to communicate in several languages.⁹ Many people realize that a good command of Russian is crucial for access to information, higher education and interesting job opportunities; the development and improvement of Kyrgyz suffers accordingly.

Language use related to age

In the capital Bishkek and in other major urban areas, people and especially the younger generation communicate in Russian; however in rural areas, people of almost all ages communicate mainly in Kyrgyz.

There are no exact assessments of the use of language by people of different ages. However, observers tend to agree that the number of Russian speakers has been decreasing every year, mainly due to the outflow of the Russian-speaking part of population (Russians, other Slavic groups, Germans and so on), which also results in the deterioration of Russian language training.

TAJKISTAN

Ethnic origin and language use

Tajiks and Uzbeks, who make up the majority population, communicate mostly in their native language. The estimated rate of native language use among these groups is as high as 95–98%. In addition to Tajik and Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Farsi are important languages. Some 3,340,000 are reported to speak Tajik, 873,000 people speak Uzbek, 64,000 speak Kyrgyz and 50,000 speak Farsi. Today, the ethnic composition of Tajikistan is dominated by Tajiks, who comprise approximately 75% of population, followed by Uzbeks, with approximately 20%. Russians, Kyrgyz and others form the remaining 5% of the population (as of end of 2006).¹⁰

Second language knowledge

A large share of Tajiks and Uzbeks, primarily urban residents (about 30% of the population) use two or three languages: Tajiks may use Russian in their work and in business communication, and Uzbeks may speak Russian and/or Tajik in their professional and official activities. In terms of population in general, approximately 25% speak fluent Russian, 60% speak intermediate-level Russian, and 15% have a weak or no command of Russian. Most of the population is bilingual (Tajik/Uzbek and Russian), and in urban areas

⁹ Beatrice Schulters, 'Language and Identity: The Situation in Kyrgyzstan and the Role of Pedagogy', 2003; <http://www.cimera.org/files/other/en/11_Bea_en.pdf> (accessed 08 October 2010)

¹⁰ In line with changes in population structure, total population figures have also changed significantly. In 1989, the population of the Tajik SSR comprised 5 million while in 2007 it stood at 7 million, due to annual population growth of more than 2%.

increasingly trilingual. The school curriculum has compulsory Russian classes starting from elementary school.

The proportion of the population who speak foreign languages (English, French, German, Turkish etc.) is relatively small, some 1.5–2%.

Socio-economic indicators related to language use

In urban areas, where roughly 30% of the population lives, people generally have a good command of Russian. Many private companies and public institutions have retained Russian as the primary language of communication.

Russian is spoken mainly in urban areas, whereas people in rural areas communicate mainly in Tajik/Uzbek. Population earnings differ significantly between rural and urban residents, with the later earning almost twice as much. Similarly, within urban areas, better-paid jobs in private sector are open only to those who speak fluent or good Russian. Top-tier jobs with the highest salaries go to those with knowledge of foreign languages such as English, German or Turkish.

Language use and geography

The majority of ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan (roughly 90%) are proficient in Tajik. Similarly, Tajiks living in areas with a majority Uzbek population speak Uzbek as a second language. For instance, in Dushanbe and regional/district centres, where Tajik is predominant, Uzbeks generally know Tajik. In areas close to the Uzbek border, where mostly Uzbeks live, Tajiks speak fluent or near-fluent Uzbek.

TURKMENISTAN

Primary language use and mother tongue self-identification

Turkmen is used as the primary language by 72% of the population, Russian by 12%, Uzbek 9%, and others 7%.¹¹ In the early years of independence in the 1990's, everyday use of Turkmen and Russian was similar, with little difference between urban and rural areas. However, following the implementation of new language policies, the situation has gradually evolved in favour of Turkmen, although rural Turkmenistan still speaks Turkmen

Discrepancies can be observed between the population as per ethnic origin and actual language use. Ethnic group composition: Turkmen 85%, Uzbek 5%, Russian 4%, other 6%. Primary spoken languages: Turkmen (official) 72%, Russian 12%, Uzbek 9%, and other 7%.¹²

The issue of mother tongue among the population has not been researched, but people usually identify themselves in national and ethnic terms. Out of 85% of ethnic Turkmen, 99% report Turkmen as their 'mother tongue'.¹³

¹¹ CIA Factbook, Turkmenistan (2003), Section: People (language), <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html>> (accessed 10 March 2010)

¹² CIA Factbook, Turkmenistan, (2003) <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html>> (accessed 10 March 2010).

¹³ Ataturk.com, 'Turkmen (Turkmenistan)', <<http://www.ataturk.com/content/view/59/89/>> (accessed 01 June 2010).

Language use and language policy in Central Asia

Second language use and knowledge

Many ethnic Turkmen still speak both Turkmen and Russian, but today even most urban residents tend to use Turkmen in daily life. Other nationalities use Russian as their language of everyday communication, and national and ethnic minorities usually speak two or three languages: their native tongue, Russian and the young increasingly speak Turkmen.

Language use and geography

Before 1990, Turkmen and Russian functioned almost on par in Turkmenistan, with Turkmen spoken mainly in rural areas and Russian in the cities.¹⁴ The situation has gradually changed from 1991 onwards, with Turkmen gaining ground in urban areas. In cities and settlements with large minority populations (Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Armenians, Azeris etc.), the younger population usually speaks several languages, including their native tongue, Russian as a second language and Turkmen.

Language use and socio-economic indicators

Russian is spoken mainly in big cities while rural areas communicate largely in Turkmen. Urban residents earn more, with the best jobs opportunities to be found in the private sector or in foreign companies active in the oil, gas and construction sectors. These jobs are open to those who are fluent in English, Turkish, French and/or Malaysian.

Even though English and Turkish are taught at schools and give better job opportunities, only a small proportion of people actually communicate in these languages.

Language use related to age

Urban youth approximately up to age 30 communicate mainly in Turkmen, using Russian occasionally. Rural youth speak only Turkmen and most rural schoolchildren no longer know Russian. Turkmen is, however, hard to acquire in schools because of limited study-hours and poorly designed language programmes and textbooks.

UZBEKISTAN

In most cases, Uzbek and Russian predominate in Uzbekistan. In each region of the country the proportions vary, depending on the ethnic structure of the population.

¹⁴ Sultan-Han Akkulyuly, 'Twenty years ago laws on languages were adopted in Central Asia', 2009; <http://rus.azattyq.org/content/state_languages_central_asia_round_table/1873073.html> (accessed 21 March 2010).

Primary language

The majority of the population of Uzbekistan are Uzbeks (84%). More than 10% are representatives of other Central Asian ethnicities – 4.5% Tajik, 25% Kazakh, 2% Karakalpak, 1% Kyrgyz; also Turkmen and other ethnicities. Russians and other Slavic ethnicities remain an important minority (about 2–4%). There are also Tatars, Koreans and others. The official language is Uzbek, and 90% of the population speak Uzbek. In major cities, Russian is widespread – more than 5% of the population use Russian as their primary language.¹⁵ Russian is considered to be the native language of the majority of the non-Uzbek population.

Second-language knowledge

According to the Russian Information Agency (RIA), in 2003, 57% of Uzbekistan's population spoke at least some Russian. According to other sources, as much as 70% of the population speaks at least some Russian.¹⁶ A recent survey of students, teachers, professors and bureaucrats found that only 1% of respondents use English in their professional activities and read publications in English.¹⁷

Language use and geography

Some sources indicate that the Persian-speaking Tajik population of Uzbekistan may be as large as 25% to 30% of the total population,¹⁸ but these estimates are based on unverifiable reports. Tajik is the dominant language spoken in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand.

Language use and age

During the years following independence, the study-hours devoted to Russian were cut in those Uzbek schools which did not have Russian as the main medium of instruction. In addition, the number of qualified teachers of Russian and the Russian ethnic minority (especially in rural areas) has decreased, and there is a shortage of textbooks. The level of Russian among the younger generation is usually significantly lower than for the older generation. On the other hand, English is becoming popular, especially among the young. However, it is far from replacing the position of Russian.

Even though 82% of pupils attend schools with Uzbek as the main medium of instruction, the social significance of Russian remains high, as shown by a socio-linguistic survey of youth carried out in Tashkent and Samarkand in 2003.¹⁹ Responses as to language use in professional and family settings are summarized in the two tables below.

¹⁵ 'Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan', Open Society Institute, 2002, p. 452.

¹⁶ 'Zhizn i priklyucheniya russkogo yazika vdali ot rodiny', *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*, <<http://www.nrs.ru/articles/4987.html>> (accessed 22 March 2010).

¹⁷ Ruben Nazaryan, 'Yazikovaya situatsia v Uzbekistane: Realnost i perspektivy', <<http://mapryal.russkoeslovo.org/content/>> (accessed 26 March 2010).

¹⁸ Richard Foltz, 'The Tajiks of Uzbekistan', *Central Asian Survey*, 15(2), 213–216 (1996).

¹⁹ Survey carried out by the Tashkent Department of teachers of Russian language and literature.

Table 1.6 Tashkent

	Professional activities	Informal setting
Only Uzbek	7.4%	44.3%
Uzbek and Russian	41%	20.7%
Only Russian	40.2%	29%

Table 1.7 Samarkand (Tajik is widely spoken)

	Professional activities	Informal setting
Only Uzbek	11%	19%
Uzbek and Russian	38%	
Only Russian	39%	20%
Tajik and Russian		21%
Tajik		38%

Language use and socio-economic indicators

70% of the low-income population resides in rural areas where knowledge of Russian or any other foreign language is significantly lower compared to the larger towns and cities.²⁰ By contrast, in urban areas where knowledge of Russian is much more widespread (Tashkent, Samarkand, Navoi), income levels are also much higher. The difference in GRP (Gross Regional Product) between the most developed region (Tashkent) and the least developed region (Karakalpakstan) stood at about 4.2 as of 2003.²¹

II. Historical, legal and political overview

This section gives an overview of historical, legal and political developments pertaining to language policy in the Central Asian countries. The following topics are addressed: laws and regulations pertaining to official language(s); use of a particular script (Roman, Cyrillic, Arabic) and official institutions codifying language use.

The Central Asian countries differentiate between state language, official language and languages of inter-ethnic communication. As of 2010, the situation was as follows:

Table 2.1

	State language	Official and inter-ethnic communication
Kazakhstan	Kazakh	Russian (official)
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz	Russian (official)
Tajikistan	Tajik	Russian (inter-ethnic communication)
Turkmenistan	Turkmen	Russian and English (inter-ethnic communication)
Uzbekistan	Uzbek	Russian (inter-ethnic communication)

Parliamentary assembly of the Turkic states

The parliamentary assembly of Turkic states was established in 2008 by Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The 9th Summit of Turkic-Speaking Countries' Heads of State

²⁰ World Bank, *Uzbekistan Living Standards Assessment: Policies to Improve Living Standards*, in two volumes, May 2003, p. 5.

²¹ Bakhodir Ganiev, 'Neobhodimost i uslovia detsentralizatsii dlya effektivnogo ispolzovaniya potentsiala regionov', Proceedings of the third conference of young specialists educated abroad, Vol. 10, p. 100. Tashkent, 2005.

Language use and language policy in Central Asia

was held in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan, in October 2009. The summit was attended by the presidents of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, as well as the vice prime minister of Turkmenistan's Cabinet of Ministers.

KAZAKHSTAN

Official language and general language policy

According to the Law on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan (11 July 1997), the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan is Kazakh. The state language is the language of public administration, legislation, court proceedings and case management, in all spheres of societal relations throughout the state. In state institutions and local administration bodies, the Russian language is officially used alongside Kazakh. In non-governmental organizations the state language is used and, if necessary, other languages as well.

Kazakhstan has adopted a 'linguistic policy concept' and a 'national programme for the functioning and development of languages for 2001–2010', according to which, by 2010, all central and local executive bodies should have provide translation of all documentation into the state language. The situation of the Kazakh language is a complex and vexed issue, with a strong political character. Points regarding the development of the Kazakh language are included in the programmes of almost all political parties and movements in Kazakhstan.

Script

In the period from 1929 to 1940, Kazakh was written in the Latin (or Roman) script. The Cyrillic script was subsequently adopted in 1940. The problem of returning to the Latin alphabet has been widely debated since independence. In 2007 the president of Kazakhstan announced the need to discuss the issue, and the government has started some preparatory activities for transition to the Latin script. However, no official decision has yet been taken. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, the transition process will be long (10–15 years) and consist of several stages. The websites of some executive bodies (among them the government site) and information agencies already have versions in Latin script.

Institutions codifying language use

The National Coordinative–Methodical Centre for the Development of Languages named after Shaysultan Shayahmetovich was formed by government decision in 1999. The main tasks of the Centre are teaching the state language as well as the creation of scientific and methodological tools for language learning.

KYRGYZSTAN

Official language and general language policy

In light of the prevailing rhetoric of independence and nation-building, Kyrgyz was given the legal status of 'state language of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic' in 1989.

Kyrgyz vs. Russian language

In 1995 President Askar Akaev proposed to give Russian the status of ‘official language’, but met opposition from the parliament. In 2000 Akaev raised the issue again, and the parliament finally gave its approval. This effort was driven by three factors. First, there was a drastic outflow of the Russian population from Kyrgyzstan. Second, it was deemed necessary to maintain good relations with Moscow. Third, this was a way of securing political support from the country’s significant non-ethnic Kyrgyz population (Russians, Uzbeks etc.). Accordingly, after the 2003 amendments to the Constitution, Kyrgyz maintained its status as ‘state language’ and Russian acquired the status of ‘official’ language.

Uzbek language

The Uzbek population of Kyrgyzstan grew from 563,000 ((12.9% of population) in 1990 to 768,400 (14. 3%) in 2009. In 2006 several Uzbek ‘heavyweights’ (businessmen, members of the parliament) demanded the legal recognition of Uzbek as an official language. However, this has never turned into a serious debate, as the Kyrgyz government took aggressive efforts to co-opt and pressure the key leaders of the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan.

Script

The issue of script is not at the top of agenda. Before 1928 the Kyrgyz language used the Arabic script; between 1928 and 1940 the Latin alphabet was in use, and Cyrillic was adopted in 1940. Immediately after independence there were calls to return to the Latin script, but this has never become a serious issue. Some sporadic discussions still occur, but at present there are no significant movements to lobby in favour of changing the script. The use of the Latin (or Arabic) script for Kyrgyz is nowhere to be noticed.

Official institutions codifying language use

In 1998 a National Commission on State Language under the president of the Kyrgyz Republic was established. This Commission was similar to a ‘state agency’ with the mission of ‘development of the state language’. The Commission acquired greatest notoriety as the ‘examiner’ of candidates for the position of the president during 2000, 2005 and 2009 presidential elections. The head of the Commission would often speak about various ways to develop the Kyrgyz language, but overall the Commission has not had a significant impact on language policies and politics.

TAJIKISTAN

Official language and general language policy

The Language Law defines Tajik language as a state language and Russian as a language of inter-ethnic communication. The government has taken measures to safeguard the languages of the Gorno-Badakhshan region and allowed the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz of Tajikistan to develop their own cultural institutions. It was decided that after 1995 all official affairs should be conducted in Tajik, but the use of Russian remains widespread. Domestic legislation,

particularly the Constitution of Tajikistan, provides a favourable regulatory framework and extensive flexibility in terms of use of language and modes of communication, with particular focus on protecting the rights of minorities.

Script

The Tajik language is written in a modified form of Cyrillic developed in 1940. After independence, the script was slightly changed, as four letters – Ц (pronounced ‘tse’), Ъ (pronounced as a strong ‘I’), Ш (pronounced ‘tsha’) and soft letter identifying (‘) – were removed. Based on this revision, language phonetics has also changed significantly. Interestingly, members of the older generation still pronounce the now-omitted letters, whereas the younger generation has a marked tendency to leave them out. In recent years there has been an increasing debate on changing to the Arabic script, or possibly even Latin to better integrate the country into the English-speaking world.

Official institutions codifying language use

The Abuabdulo Rudaki Institute of the Tajik Language and Literature, part of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, is in charge of Tajik language regulations and planning.

TURKMENISTAN

Official language and general language policy

The Constitution of Turkmenistan defines Turkmen as the state language. Russian and English have the status of languages of inter-ethnic communication.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new Turkmen leadership took a series of measures to remove the heritage of the Soviet past and return to Turkmen culture. The first step was the adoption of a law of the Turkmen SSR ‘On Language’ (still in effect) that introduced Turkmen as state language. Then the Constitution of 1992 proclaimed Turkmen the official state language, leaving Russian with the status of language of inter-ethnic communication. In 1993 English was moved ahead of Russian as the ‘second state language’, although in practical terms Russian remained a key language in government and other spheres for a long time.²²

Script

From 1928 to 1940, early Soviet Turkmen literature was written in the Latin alphabet; since 1940, standard Turkmen was written in the Cyrillic script. In 1993, President Niyazov issued a decree of transition from Cyrillic-based alphabet to a Latin-based script, and from then on the Latin script has been taught in the schools and universities. Furthermore, in May 1992 a resolution was adopted on changing geographic names and administrative terms from Russian to Turkmen.²³ The Latin script is now used in all state institutions, entities, companies, etc. It is also used in marketplaces and shops, and on buildings and street signs. The older

²² ‘The Written Language’. From < <http://countrystudies.us/turkmenistan/13.htm> > (accessed 5 March 2010).

²³ ‘The Written Language’. From < <http://countrystudies.us/turkmenistan/13.htm> > (accessed 5 March 2010).

population suffer the most, because they are unfamiliar with the Latin script, where almost all those aged 40–50 and younger are well acquainted with it.

UZBEKISTAN

Official language policy

The ‘Law on State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan’ was adopted on 21 October 1989, edited in 1995 and amended in 2004. In the 1989 version, Article 1 read as follows:

The state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan is Uzbek. The Republic of Uzbekistan will ensure utmost development and functioning of the Uzbek language in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the Republic. The development and free use of the Russian language as the language of inter-ethnic communication of the people of the former Soviet Union in the territory of Uzbekistan will be ensured.

The new edition of the law from 1995 significantly shortens Article 1 to: ‘The State language of the Republic of Uzbekistan is Uzbek’. In the wording of the new edition of 1995, Article 4 of the law was abrogated. This article had read: ‘Laws, decrees and other documents of the state power and administration in the Republic of Uzbekistan are to be prepared, adopted and announced in the state language of the Republic. Translations of these documents into Russian, Karakalpak, Tajik, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and other languages are to be published in official media.’

Article 8 of the 1995 version states: ‘Legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan and other documents of the state power and administration are to be adopted and published in the state language. Translations of these documents are to be published in other languages.’

Script

On 2 September 1993, the law ‘On introducing an Uzbek alphabet based on Latin script’ was adopted. Currently, there are two parallel alphabets in the country. The Latin alphabet is predominant on street signs, road signs, in metro stations and the like. In many other cases, Latin not only has to coexist with Cyrillic but is losing ground to the latter in terms of its application area. Both scripts are used in the Uzbek Internet zone as well, with most web portals in Cyrillic. Latin characters are frequently used for writing the names of rubrics and titles of articles, with the core text in Cyrillic.

State institutions and structures also print titles as well as some publications in the Latin alphabet, even if the texts themselves are in Cyrillic. Some web portals present their content not solely in Russian or English but in both scripts (e.g. the website of the Central Bank of Uzbekistan).

Official institutions codifying language use

In 1993 a special commission on the introduction of the Latin alphabet was created, chaired by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. However, the progress of this body has been very sluggish.

III. Language use in different spheres

This section provides an overview of language use and regulations applicable to various spheres of public life: education (including minority and foreign languages); government; the army and police; the judiciary; business/ the economy and advertising.

KAZAKHSTAN

Education

Russian remains the predominant language of science and education. In the 1999/2000 academic year, according to the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science, out of 3.5 million pupils, 1.6 million were studying in Kazakh (50.6%), 1.5 million in Russian (45%), 80,000 in Uzbek (2.3%), 23,000 in Uighur (0.6%), 2500 in Tajik (0.07%) and over a thousand in other languages. Even though the total number of schools with Kazakh as the medium of instruction is gradually increasing and by 2000 had reached nearly 43% (7910) of the total number of schools in the country, their regional distribution remains uneven, as does the urban–rural distribution.²⁴

In 2007 there were more than 7800 secondary schools in Kazakhstan, about 3750 of them with Kazakh as the medium of instruction. In the same year, over 80% of school-age children of Kazakh ethnicity were studying in Kazakh schools. However, it should be noted that more than 80% of them are located in rural areas.²⁵ Alongside schools with instruction solely in Kazakh or Russian, there are 2,067 schools with mixed language of instruction. In addition, there are operating across the country 90 schools where the teaching is conducted entirely in Uzbek, Tajik, Uighur or Ukrainian .

The 22 languages of ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan are taught as a separate subject in 108 schools. In order to promote the various national languages and cultures in the country, a system of Sunday schools to teach native languages has been established. In the 1999/2000 academic year, 14 languages – Korean, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Tatar, German, Turkish, Chechen, Uighur, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Chuvash, Polish, Kurdish and Dungan – were taught as native languages at Sunday schools.

The language of instruction and education in orphanages and similar organizations is determined by local executive bodies according to the national composition of those living there.

Foreign language is a compulsory subject in the school curriculum starting from 5th grade in all secondary schools of Kazakhstan. In special schools, foreign language is taught from the 1st grade. In most secondary schools, English is taught, although some schools also offer French or German.

Government

²⁴ National Programme of functioning and development of languages for 2001–2010, Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001, Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan, <http://www.mki.gov.kz/showarticle.php?lang=rus&id=3614> (accessed 8 October 2010).

²⁵ Concept of extending the operation of the official language and increasing its competitiveness for 2007–2010, Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007, Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan, <http://www.mki.gov.kz/showarticle.php?lang=rus&id=3615> (accessed 8 October 2010).

According to the Law on Languages of 1997, the working language of the national organs, organizations and institutions of local self-government of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the state language, along with Russian. Analysis of the use of Kazakh in ministries and public institutions showed that the proportion of documents prepared by the central state organs in the official language is only 20–30%, and 45–50% of the overall document flow.

According to the National Programme for the functioning and development of languages for 2001–2010, official transactions are to be carried out in the state language, but high-quality simultaneous translation into other languages is also to be provided. Normative legal acts, speeches of officials and documents for official use are to be prepared initially in the national language. In 2008, the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan, the General Prosecutor's Office, the National Security Committee, the Central Election Commission, and the Constitutional Court of Kazakhstan completed the translation of documentation to the state language.

Today the president of Kazakhstan starts all his speeches, including the annual address to the people of Kazakhstan, in Kazakh, and then moves on to Russian. It has become customary for all other high governmental officials to follow this practice in their speeches and addresses.

Kazakh legislation does not contain any provision making knowledge of the state language a mandatory requirement for employment in the public sector. Job advertisements from the national executive bodies usually state that a candidate should know the state language to the extent necessary for the execution of functional responsibilities – a very flexible requirement. Since all documentation is available in both the Kazakh and Russian languages, the government in recent years has started developing special tests to check the proficiency of Kazakh of candidates applying for jobs in the public sector.

Army and police

In the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as in all types of military and paramilitary organizations, provision is made for use of both the state language and Russian. The use of Kazakh in the army and police is increasing. Since 2008 the Armed Forces have accelerated the process of translation of documentation into the state language. By 2009, the proportion of incoming correspondence in the Kazakh language to the central office of the Kazakh Ministry of Defence had grown to 45%, and outgoing correspondence to 68%.

Judiciary

All court proceedings in Kazakhstan are conducted in the state language; if necessary, Russian or other languages may be used on a par with Kazakh. Court decisions are rendered in Kazakh and Russian. In practice, verdicts are first given in Russian, and then translated into Kazakh. The same practice is used by the prosecution.

The entire legal corpus is available in Kazakh and in Russian, and some acts are available in English as well. Lack of a legal corpus in the state language was an issue during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Business and the economy

The main working languages of the major companies in Kazakhstan are Russian and English.

Language use and language policy in Central Asia

1. The Kazmunaigas company site has three versions – Kazakh, Russian and English. All three versions are regularly updated; however, the Russian version is the most developed and contains information and news not always posted on the Kazakh and English versions.
2. The Tengizchevroil company site has three versions – Kazakh, Russian and English. All versions are equally updated, with no differences in the information presented.
3. The company site of CNPC-International Aktobe Petroleum has three versions: Chinese, English and Russian. In Chinese companies, Russian and English are normally used.

Almost all high-level employment ads in Kazakhstan contain the following note: ‘Knowledge of Russian and English is necessary. Knowledge of Kazakh is desirable.’ Thus, knowledge of the state language is not necessary for employment in the private sector, international organizations, and foreign companies.

Advertising

All advertisement billboards in Kazakhstan must contain information in Kazakh, Russian and, if necessary, in other languages. Radio and TV commercials are in Kazakh and Russian. It has been complicated to provide Kazakh translations on advertisement billboards in cities. In Almaty all advertisement billboards today are in both Kazakh and Russian.

KYRGYZSTAN

Education

Major issues related to language in the education sector include the growing pressure to use Kyrgyz, and consistent government resistance to the expansion of Uzbek language schools. Russian remains the most widespread language of higher education, while the majority of secondary schools teach in Kyrgyz.

Table 3.1 Number of schools (primary, secondary, higher level) by medium of instruction

	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total	2048		2052		2073		2104		2137		2149		2168	
Kyrgyz only	1319	64.4	1321	64.4	1324	63.9	1330	63.2	1359	63.6	1363	63.4	1388	64.0
Russian only	140	6.8	143	7.0	148	7.1	140	6.7	189	8.8	198	9.2	195	9.0
Uzbek only	143	7.0	141	6.9	132	6.4	129	6.1	131	6.1	132	6.1	129	6.0
Kyrgyz-Rus.	302	14.7	308	15.0	314	15.1	339	16.1	341	16.0	344	16.0	338	15.6
Kyrgyz-Uzb.	55	2.7	57	2.8	56	2.7	53	2.5	53	2.5	50	2.3	50	2.3
Russian-Uzb.	18	0.9	24	1.2	34	1.6	30	1.4	38	1.8	39	1.8	43	2.0
Kyrg.-Uzb.-R.	13	0.6	12	0.6	14	0.7	20	1.0	18	0.8	15	0.7	17	0.8

Table 3.2 Ratio of pupils (primary, secondary, higher education) by medium of instruction

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Kyrgyz only	49.0	49.0	47.6	47.2	47.3	46.7	47.2
Russian only	10.0	9.9	10.5	9.9	10.5	10.8	11.2

Uzbek only	9.9	9.1	7.8	7.4	7.3	7.4	6.6
Kyrgyz-Russian	23.1	23.6	24.2	25.3	25.7	26.2	25.5
Kyrgyz-Uzbek	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.7
Russian-Uzbek	2.2	2.7	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.7
Kyrgyz-Uzbek-Russian	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.6

With the growing interest in both Russian and Kyrgyz, the number of private teachers has increased dramatically.

Many Russian-language courses are opening up, particularly in the capital Bishkek. The interest among Kyrgyz for learning Russian can be explained by the high rates of both internal labour migration and emigration. Many rural dwellers come to Bishkek where Russian is the main language of communication and the proportion of Russian-speaking people quite high, so migrants need to know Russian or at least understand it in order to find work. In the case of labour emigration (to Russia and other CIS countries), good knowledge of Russian is a requirement.

All pupils are required to take both Kyrgyz and Russian language courses throughout all eleven years of school. One of these languages is studied as a native language and the other as a second language. In Uzbek-medium schools, Uzbek is taught from 1st through 11th grade, in addition to Kyrgyz and Russian.

A third (in the case of Uzbek schools, a fourth) language (referred to as a ‘foreign’ language) is taught from 2nd grade through to 11th grade. Either English or German or French is usually taught as a foreign language. Some schools provide a choice for pupils, but mostly it depends on the availability of a teacher.

Government

According to the law on ‘State Language’, Kyrgyz (in the capacity of state language) is to be used as a working language by all governmental agencies. However, the law allows the use of Russian (due to its status as ‘official’ language) if necessary. The law requires written documents in governmental agencies to be in Kyrgyz, and, when necessary, be translated into Russian. Russian is predominantly used by all central (national) authorities. Local government outlets (at *oblast* and *rayon* levels), especially in rural areas with Kyrgyz-speaking population, use Kyrgyz. The law requires several top officials (including the president, prime minister and parliament speaker) to be able to read, write and express themselves freely in Kyrgyz. From July 2010, embassies, consulates and other diplomatic representations of Kyrgyzstan in foreign countries are required to use the Kyrgyz language in their work, and Russian only in case of necessity. The law was signed in January 2010, with a six-month transition period.

Army and police

The defence and interior ministries formally introduced Kyrgyz as the working language in their agencies, in 2006 and 2008 respectively. However, as in other state agencies, both Kyrgyz and Russian are being used in parallel, with Kyrgyz dominating in rural areas and Russian in Bishkek and other major urban centres. In recent years instructions have been translated into Kyrgyz, but the Russian version remains the main reference source. The language of command also remains Russian, despite some *ad hoc* efforts to integrate Kyrgyz.

Judiciary

Court decisions are rendered in either Russian or Kyrgyz, depending on the language used in the particular trial. The law requires the state to provide translation into Kyrgyz or Russian, depending on the needs of the involved parties. Courts in Bishkek use mostly Russian, with Kyrgyz used more in rural areas. Prosecutors principally use Russian in their correspondence as well as in instructing cases.

The entire legal corpus is available in Russian and in Kyrgyz. According to the law, the version written in Kyrgyz is considered authentic, though in fact most documents are first prepared in Russian and then translated into Kyrgyz.

Business and the economy

The three largest companies operating in Kyrgyzstan are Kumtor Operating Company (gold mining), Gazprom Neft Azia (oil trade) and Sky Mobile (mobile telephone operator).²⁶ The working language in Gazprom Neft Azia and Sky Mobile is Russian. The website of Gazprom Neft Azia is available in Russian only. The website of Sky Mobile is identical in Russian and Kyrgyz. The Kumtor Operating Company does not have a website, but information about the company is placed on the website of Centerra (a Canadian company), which owns Kumtor, and is in English only.

A purely domestic company (with no foreign shareholders), ‘Shoro’ (drinking water), maintains a website in Russian and English. The English version is limited to basic information, with the most updated content available in Russian.

Two major sources of formal employment advertisements are ‘Vechernii Bishkek’ and the website www.job.kg. Both sources contain ads for white-collar and blue-collar jobs. Nearly all advertisements are published in Russian, except for some individual announcements in English from international organizations, always accompanied by a Russian version.

Advertising

Street billboards in Bishkek are in Russian and Kyrgyz. A random analysis on one given day in April showed that about 45% of the billboards were in Russian, 30% in Kyrgyz and 25% contained identical Kyrgyz and Russian text.

²⁶ Note that all companies have foreign capital and owners, but operate as legal entities in Kyrgyzstan, i.e. they are not a part of respective ‘mother’ companies, such as Gazprom or Beeline in Russia.

TAJIKISTAN

Education

Prior to 1991, the languages of instruction in the state educational system were Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Russian. When Tajik became the state language in 1989, schools using Russian as the primary medium of instruction began teaching Tajik as a second language in all grades. After independence, school curricula included more Tajik language and literature studies, including classical Persian literature. However, few textbooks were available in Tajik, and by the end of the 1980s, only 10 to 25% of students attending Tajik-medium schools had textbooks or other teaching materials available in that language.

The proportion of schools providing education in Tajik, Russian or Uzbek was linked to the particular ethnic groups' proportion of the total population with some bias towards the Russian language. Higher education is conducted only in Tajik and in Russian. Most colleges and universities are bilingual, with both Russian and Tajik groups. The only exceptions are the Tajik-Russian Slavic University and the Tajikistan branch of the Moscow State University, which teach in Russian only. The medium of instruction for more than 80% of students is Tajik.

Study of the Russian language is compulsory starting from elementary school (similarly, those attending Russian-medium schools have to study Tajik, with the only exception being schools for the children of Russian military base staff). Starting from the 5th grade, foreign languages, with a choice of English, French or German, become compulsory till 11th grade. But the quality of teaching in many places is very low, and especially village schools lack teachers and textbooks.

Government

Prior to the 2009 language law, the government had the choice of working in either Tajik or Russian, with the final documents (laws, decrees, etc.) published in the two languages. At present, the official working language is Tajik and all documents and correspondence must be in Tajik. The transition is very gradual, and many government agencies (including the President's Office) still use Russian extensively for communication with external parties such as development partners and media.

Tajik is not required for employment in the public sector, but is for several senior governmental positions.

Army and police

The use of Tajik is increasing, but Russian is still widespread.

Judiciary

Court decisions, cases instructed by the Prosecutor's Office and all other legal documents must be in Tajik.

Business

The three largest companies in the public sector are TALCO (aluminium), Barki Tojik

(electricity monopolist) and TojikTelecom (telecommunications provider). The official working language in these enterprises is Tajik, but Russian dominates in informal communication and work communication.

With the three largest private companies (Babylon – mobile/internet operator, Orient group – banking, manufacturing, investment and Obi Zulol – beverages), Tajik is officially the working language, but informally the use of Russian is widespread.

There are no employment websites in Tajik. Internet ads are only in Russian and English. Employment ads in newspapers are mostly in Russian.

Advertising

In Dushanbe roughly 70% of billboards are in Tajik, 30% in Russian.

TURKMENISTAN

Education

Schooling is conducted mainly in Turkmen. The transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet was enacted in parallel with the conception of new language programmes in Turkmen, Russian and English, which caused considerable disruption. As of 2009, there were 1711 secondary schools in Turkmenistan. There are no private or non-state educational institutions, with the exception of the International (American) School in the capital.²⁷ Previously, there were about 30 Kazakh schools, but since 2000, enrolment in Uzbek and Kazakh schools has been stopped.

Until 2001 there were 49 fully Russian-medium schools and 56 with mixed languages of instruction. Now the Russian-medium schools have also shifted to Turkmen as the language of instruction, with some one or two Russian-medium classes still operational in the major cities or cities with a considerable Russian population, such as Turkmenbashi.²⁸ There are four Turkmen-Turkish schools in the country, with education in Turkish and Turkmen, and only one Russian school, named after A.S. Pushkin, established in 2002 in Ashgabat. The Turkmen State University offers various languages. The State Turkmen-Turkish University conducts classes in Turkmen, Turkish and English. The only Russian University in Turkmenistan is a subsidiary of the Russian State University of Oil and Gas; established in 2007, it is named after I.M.Gubkin and located in Ashgabat.

In Turkmenistan almost all schools teach a compulsory set of foreign languages from the second year of secondary schooling. Pupils learn Russian and English; in a few schools German and French are also available.

²⁷ Ashgabat International School, < <http://ashgabat.qsischool.org/> > (accessed 8 October 2010).

²⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

Government

In 2000 it was decided that all official documents and business correspondence are to be conducted in the state language, and written in the Latin alphabet.²⁹ This was one of the reasons for mass discharges of non-Turkmen citizens from state and governmental positions. All state structures function solely in Turkmen, except for official web sites: these are normally available in Turkmen, Russian and English. Usually all three language sections work properly.

Knowledge of Turkmen is a formal requirement for employment in the civil service and public sector, which makes it difficult if not impossible for members of ethnic minorities to work in the public sector. This is also a formal legal requirement for most foreign companies operating and recruiting in Turkmenistan. In practice, however, foreign companies look at profiles and experience, and usually ignore lack of knowledge of the state language.

Army and police

The army and the police use only Turkmen as language of instruction and command, also on the informal level. There may be some exceptions in cities like Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk), where people traditionally spoke the languages of the local ethnic minorities.

Judiciary

Petitions and writs are to be filed in state language. Until recently, Russian was also admissible, but now people receive help in composing their petitions in Turkmen. On the regional level, however, civil court proceedings may be conducted fully in Russian when the representatives of both sides are of Russian ethnicity. All court decisions are rendered in the state language. Notaries and prosecutors work solely in Turkmen. The legal corpus is available both in Turkmen and Russian.

Business and the economy

At present, all business correspondence in the country is conducted in the state language. However, when receiving reports, various state organs demand copies in Russian because Turkmen is still not ready for such use and not many people can write proper Turkmen; moreover, the introduction of the new alphabet has meant additional problems.³⁰ The three largest companies operating in Turkmenistan are:

- 1) 'Turkmengas': Oil & gas conglomerate of Turkmenistan

Uses only Russian language on the web site, but functions fully in Turkmen language including circulation of documents, tax reports, etc.

- 2) 'Turkmenvnesheconombank': The State Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs of Turkmenistan. The web site uses Turkmen, Russian and English, with Russian having the most updated news. All sections are active in all three languages. The Bank functions solely in the state language, as do all other state companies and entities.

²⁹ "Najot": Status of ethnic Uzbeks in Turkmenistan. 11 September 2009. From <http://www.hr-uzbekistan.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=411:najot-250909&catid=1:latest-news> (accessed 19 April 2010).

³⁰ Kurbanov Dovlet, 'Russky yazyk vnov interesen' <<http://www.gundogar.org/?01104924200000000000011000000>> (accessed 15 April 2010).

3) Dragon Oil Plc: The biggest foreign oil company and partner in Turkmenistan; English is the working language, but all reports must be submitted in Turkmen and Russian to Turkmen state officials. Web site available only in English.

The MCT Employment Agency (‘Management Consulting and Training’) website uses English and Russian. The employment agency ‘Partner’ uses only Russian.

Advertising

Large hoardings alongside highways and avenues are all in Turkmen. Smaller advertisement billboards in Ashgabat use Turkmen, Russian and in some circumstances English, depending on the target audience, with Turkmen prevailing. These billboards usually use only one language. In Ashgabat and regional centres, small notices at bus stops (promoting sales, courses, concerts etc.) and street flyers with promotional offers are mostly in Russian.

Advertisements in regional newspapers are printed only in Turkmen. The exception is the official Russian-language daily *Neutral Turkmenistan*, which also publishes all its advertisements in Russian. The first page featuring the latest news in the special newspaper ‘Advertisements’ is published in Turkmen, but inside all the ads are in Russian.

This aspect of language use is not regulated by legislation.

There are no commercials on Turkmen television.

UZBEKISTAN

Education

In Uzbek pre-school education, the obligatory study of Russian has been reduced since 1991 and is now abolished. Russian is obligatory for study in primary schools and in the higher education system.

Table 3.3 Schools with Russian language of instruction:³¹

1989	1992	2000	2008
1230	1147	813	739

There are 63 institutions of higher education in Uzbekistan, and Russian is mandatory in all of them. At one university in the republic – Fergana State University – education is conducted exclusively in Russian.³² There are departments with Russian-language education in most universities. However, the number of specializations available for study in Russian has decreased after independence. Before independence the same amount of specializations were offered both in Russian and Uzbek. The number of specializations offered in Russian is three

³¹ Data from the official web portal of the Ministry of the Public Education of Uzbekistan and Yunus Halikov, ‘Bespraven, no vostrebovan. Golovolomka s russkim yazikov v Uzbekistane’ <<http://www.centrasia.ru/news2.php?st=1158874860>> (accessed 26 March 2010).

³² Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation ‘Ruskij yazik v mire’, Moscow, 2003, <http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/B6BE784B3E2ABD1343256DF8003AC21C?OpenDocument> (accessed 8 October 2010).

or four times less than Uzbek. For instance, in 2000, Andijan University offered studies in 17 specializations, of which only 4 were taught in Russian. At Bukhara University this ratio was 27 and 7 respectively, in Gulistan University 17 and 4, Namangan University 26 and 9, Urgench University 26 and 2.³³

The main compulsory foreign language is English, which is taught as a foreign language in all schools. Some schools also teach German and French (about 20% of schools), and there are also some schools where Arabic is taught as a foreign language. There is great diversity with respect to when foreign language learning commences: some schools start as early as the 1st grade, others as late as 5th grade.

Government

Knowledge of Russian carries certain advantages – not only information-cultural but also related to employment and career prospects, especially in the administrative sphere, where there is still Uzbek–Russian bilingualism. Significant amounts of the workflow are conducted in Russian. Although in most local government bodies, in parliament, and in some central state bodies (the Ministry of Internal Affairs, courts, education, and healthcare system) the Uzbek language is predominant, in the higher echelons of power and in many ministries and state agencies, the Russian language had retained its strong position. Legal acts, draft decrees and agreement etc. are prepared mainly in Russian.

Although some Russian-language respondents note that the requirement of knowing Uzbek made job searching more complicated,³⁴ it is incorrect to say that it has become difficult to get a job in civil service/public sector for those with no Uzbek. Taking into account the low wages and high turnover of personnel in this sector, there are no rigid language requirements. Rare cases of discrimination for not knowing the state language are related to use of the ‘language factor’ as a means of pressure against an employee.³⁵

Army and police

The language of command and instruction for the army and police is Uzbek.

Judiciary

Article 11 of the Republic of Uzbekistan ‘On Official Language’ (last amended 1995) states: ‘Legal proceedings shall be conducted in the official language or in the language of the majority of inhabitants of the area. Individuals participating in the case that do not know the language in which the legal proceedings is conducted shall be granted the right to acquaint themselves with case materials, participate in the proceedings with the help of an interpreter and defend themselves in their native language. The court decisions are rendered predominantly in Uzbek. The language used by the prosecution is almost exclusively Uzbek. Russian translations could be provided only out of courtesy if one of the parties is unfamiliar with Uzbek.’

³³ Sergey Zinin, ‘Russkiy yazik v Uzbekistane’, Materik (information-analytical portal of the post Soviet area) <http://www.materick.ru/index.php?section=analitics&bulid=51&bulsectionid=4144> (accessed 26 March 2010)

³⁴ S. Radnitz, ‘Weighing the Political and Economic Motivation in the Post-Soviet Space: The Case of Uzbekistan’ *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2006, vol. 58, no.5, p. 665.

³⁵ Evgeniy Abdullaev, ‘Russkiy yazik: zhizn posle smerty. Yazik, politika i obshestvo v sovremennom Uzbekistane’, *Neprikosnovenniy zapas*, 2009, #4 (66)

Language use and language policy in Central Asia

The legal corpus is available both in Uzbek and Russian. It is difficult to estimate the proportions precisely, but empirical observations indicate approximately 75% Uzbek and 25% Russian.

Business and economy

The three largest companies operating in Uzbekistan are:

- 1) Navoi Mining & Metallurgy Combinat (gold mining). Working language is Russian. Internet site available in Uzbek, Russian and English.
- 2) Uzbekistan Airways (air transport). Working language is Russian. Internet site available in Uzbek, Russian and English.
- 3) Almalyk Mining Metallurgy Complex (copper and gold). Working language is Russian. Internet site available in Uzbek, Russian and English.

When examined in late March 2010, the employment websites www.uzjobs.com and www.hrc.uz had 53 ads in Russian and 21 ads in English; and 71 ads in Russian and 33 ads in English, respectively. These sites featured no ads in Uzbek.

Advertising

Advertising billboards in Tashkent and some other major cities are predominantly in Russian. Most entrepreneurs prefer to advertise in Russian in order to cover a larger market segment. The proportion of advertisements in Russian seems highest in Tashkent (about 75%),³⁶ in Samarkand and Bukhara it is about 55%.

IV/ Media/culture

This section presents information about language use in the media and cultural spheres, including television and the print media.

KAZAKHSTAN

Formal regulations

In accordance with Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan ‘On mass media’, mass media in the republic shall be disseminated in the state language and other languages. The volume of broadcasting in the state language via TV and radio channels, regardless of ownership, is not to be less than the total volume of broadcasting in other languages.

Television

The Russian language remains predominant in the Kazakhstani media landscape. There are 215 central and local television and radio channels, of which only five broadcast in the state language. News programmes on national channels are sent in Kazakh and Russian.

³⁶ The author of the article ‘Zhizn i priklucheniya russkogo yazika ot rodiny vdali’ estimates that about 70% the advertising in print media in Uzbekistan is in Russian, in *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*

Language use and language policy in Central Asia

Through satellite and cable connections, Russian programmes, together with programmes from the BBC, CNN, Deutsche Welle and Polonia, are available in Kazakhstan. There are 83 foreign TV and radio programmes operating in the country, most of them broadcasting from the Russian Federation. Satellite TV is popular in rural areas, where people usually have access to only two or three national channels in Kazakh. Residents of urban areas use satellite or cable TV.

Satellite TV 'Caspionet' broadcasts continuously in Kazakh, Russian and English throughout Europe, Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

Print media

Newspapers and magazines in Kazakhstan are published in 11 languages of the various ethnicities living in the country, including Kazakh and Russian, as well as Ukrainian, Polish, German, Korean, Uighur, Turkish and Dungan.

There are about 2900 newspapers and magazines in the country. Of these, only 453 are published in the state language, and 2303 are published in Russian. In addition, 5248 Russian newspapers and magazines published in Russia are circulated in Kazakhstan.

Nearly 2400 foreign mass media are represented in Kazakhstan, including 2309 newspapers and 83 TV and radio programmes. About 90% of these are in Russian, 5% in English, 5% in other languages. Only 5.6% of Kazakhstani internet sites have content in Kazakh, while 12% of all sites have an English version.

The same situation can be observed with respect to literature published in Kazakh. The overwhelming majority of books sold in the country are published in Russia, where publishing activities are more developed and the costs lower.

The Ministry of Culture and Information annually allocates funds for the publication of books of Kazakhstani authors both in Kazakh and in Russian. However, print runs are about 2000 copies; they are distributed only to libraries and universities, and are not available in bookstores. Other Kazakhstani authors who cannot get financial support from the ministry have to publish books at their own expense.

Cultural institutions

National cultural events are held in the state language and in other languages.

There are two theatres – Kazakh and Russian – in almost every region of the country and in major cities. There are six national theatres – Kazakh, Russian, Uzbek, Uighur, German and Korean.

KYRGYZSTAN

Formal regulations

In 2008 a controversial law on television and radio was signed, which introduced regulations on language use on television and radio channels. The law requires that all TV and radio companies broadcast in either Kyrgyz or Russian, with an exemption for other languages in areas populated by ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the law requires all companies to ensure that no less than 50% of their programmes (in terms of volume/duration) are broadcast in

Kyrgyz. This requirement came as a surprise move, and most television and radio companies have not been able to meet the requirement regarding programmes in the Kyrgyz language.

Television

There are fewer than 10 television channels in Kyrgyzstan. The major one is the Kyrgyz National TV Channel, the only television channel covering the whole territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. It also transmits the programmes of various affiliated regional TV channels. The programmes of this channel are transmitted in two languages, Kyrgyz (ca. 65%) and Russian (ca. 35%). In 2005 one of the regional state TV channels (Osh-3000) was integrated into a national public TV company, ELTR. ELTR reaches about 70% of the population, and about 80% of its programmes are broadcast in Kyrgyz.

There are several private television companies in Kyrgyzstan: 5th Channel, Piramida, NBT, NTS, and Ekho Manasa. These mainly broadcast in Bishkek and the southern regions of the country. The content is dominated by programmes in Russian (over 75%); programmes in Kyrgyz are mainly news. Moreover, these companies (except 5th Channel) rely heavily on re-transmission of Russian TV productions.

All foreign TV productions are dubbed (mostly in Russian, and sometimes in Kyrgyz). Subtitles are rarely used; in most cases, any given production is aired either in Kyrgyz or Russian. Before June 2010 three regional TV companies operated in Uzbek in southern Kyrgyzstan, covering Osh and Jalalabad oblasts. However, two of them shut down after the Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflict in June 2010, and the third had reportedly changed hands from Uzbek to Kyrgyz ownership.

Foreign TV channels available in Kyrgyzstan are mainly Russian and Uzbek. Russian channels include Pervyi (1st Channel), RTR, STS, NTV, RenTV and Vesti. The Russian public TV channel (Pervyi) has regularly been found to have the highest TV audience. Due to special arrangements with the Kyrgyz TV and Radio Company, two Russian public channels, Pervyi and RTR, reach about 80% of the TV audience. Other foreign channels are limited to the capital city and surrounding areas.

About ten Uzbek TV channels broadcast in southern Kyrgyzstan, both national and provincial television channels. The above-mentioned channels are received via regular television aerials. The use of dish antennas and cable television has been expanding rapidly, and informal estimates indicate that about 30% of households are equipped with either dish antennas or cable/digital television.

Print media

The number of newspapers, journals and other press outlets registered in Kyrgyzstan is over 1000. However, analysts indicate that only about 350 to 400 of them are actually operating, and about 50 to 60 of these have become self-sustaining in the media market. About 70% of the press is published in Kyrgyz, and over 25% in Russian. There are also a limited number of newspapers in Uzbek, English and Turkish. After the June 2010 events, Uzbek-language newspapers decreased in number, as some, mainly privately owned ones, were closed down. According to analysts, the share of Russian newspapers is greatest in terms of copies sold. The foreign press is represented mainly by Russian newspapers.

The major bookstores in the country are located in the capital Bishkek, and most books are in Russian – both local and Russian literature. Foreign literature also enters the market via Russian translations. Translations of foreign (and Russian) literature into Kyrgyz are at most only a tiny part of the trade volume. The only bookstore that sells literature in Kyrgyz is in a precarious situation, and dependent on government support.

Cultural institutions

Cultural institutions are clearly divided in terms of language use. Bishkek hosts two drama theatres, one Russian and the second Kyrgyz, with plays performed in the respective languages. The opera and ballet theatre mostly presents programmes in Russian (often visiting groups from Russia), while the national philharmonic building is seen as the cradle of national Kyrgyz folk music. Overall, Russian is more widespread in the cultural sphere, although Kyrgyz popular music has begun to attract a growing audience in the last five or six years.

TAJKISTAN

Formal regulations

There are no official regulations on the use of state language versus other languages in the media.

Television

Radio and television are mainly in Tajik, with less than 20% of programmes broadcast in Russian. Regional/city channels such the ones close to Uzbekistan use Uzbek as well as Tajik. News is broadcast in Tajik, Russian and English. More than 90% of foreign films and shows are in Russian, less than 10% are translated into Tajik. The use of subtitles is rare. ORT and Vesti, two Russian state channels, are broadcast. In regions neighbouring with Uzbekistan, the population can receive two Uzbek channels with usual aerials. The presidents of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran have signed an agreement on the launching of a joint TV channel in 2010 that will be broadcasted in Tajik/Dari/Persian in all three countries.

Print media

At present, about 60 newspapers are published regularly; by contrast, around 100 newspapers were published in the early 1990s.³⁷ For print media, the most popular newspapers and magazines are in Russian, as are indeed most newspapers. There are newspapers and magazines in Tajik and Uzbek as well as bilingual newspapers. Those with the highest print runs (not necessarily the most popular) are the government newspapers *Djumhuriyat* ('The Republic') and *Minbari Halk* ('People's Tribune'). In all 42 magazines are registered: 29 industry-specific, 8 at the republic level, 2 government magazines, and 3 independent. Most books are in Russian; the selection of literature in Tajik is very limited.

Cultural institutions

Cultural institutions use both Tajik and Russian. There are mixed institutions that use both languages and specialized institutions like the Mayakovski Theatre in Russian and the Lohuti theatre in Tajik.

³⁷ Despite liberal laws and regulations, journalists were heavily persecuted during the civil war in 1992–97 and up to present. An estimated 50 journalists were killed during the war. The mass media are mostly controlled, with significant pressure exerted on the few independent newspapers.

TURKMENISTAN

Formal regulations

The activities of Turkmen media are regulated by the Turkmen Law on printed and other media in the Turkmen SSR, adopted on 10 January 1991. The Turkmen constitution makes no direct references to the mass media, which are under total state control. The national media are represented by the governmental news agency ‘Turkmen Dovlet Habarlary’, 24 newspapers, 15 magazines, 5 TV channels and 4 radio channels.

Television

Television in Turkmenistan is represented by five channels: ‘Altyn Asyr’ (Golden Age of Turkmenistan), ‘Yaslyk’ (Youth), ‘Miras’ (Heritage), ‘TV-4 Turkmenistan’ and round-the-clock ‘Ovaz’. While the first four channels broadcast solely in the Turkmen language, the fifth has the option of switching languages for satellite users. ‘TV-4 Turkmenistan’ is used as a PR channel. Until 2005 two news programmes were broadcast on Turkmen TV: ‘Habarlar’ (the news) in Russian four times a week for 15 minutes (closed August 2004) and ‘Watan’ (Motherland) in English three times a week for 20 minutes.

No foreign TV programmes or channels are transmitted or re-transmitted in Turkmenistan. Satellite TV received through dish antennas is the only alternative to state Turkmen media. In the larger cities, almost every second household has one or more such aerials directed to different satellites. Normally, one is used for Turkish channels and the other for Russian, Iranian, European and US channels.

Print media

Most newspapers and magazines are printed in Turkmen except for *Neutral Turkmenistan* which to date remains the only newspaper printed in Russian. It is governmental, so the content does not differ much from the other publications. Moreover the president of Turkmenistan is the founder of this newspaper, as of many others. All state workers and usually students from state universities are obliged to subscribe to state publications. Except for *Neutral Turkmenistan*, publications in minority languages are non-existent. The Turkish newspaper *Zaman-Turkmenistan* is the only foreign newspaper in Turkmenistan, which even possesses its own printing house. It is printed in Turkmen as other newspapers, but its content is not strictly controlled by the Turkmen state. Agreement on the functioning of *Zaman* was reached on the highest level between the two countries and was signed by special presidential decree. Subscription to any foreign publications is forbidden. Politically sensitive foreign literature including newspapers and periodicals are confiscated at the border.³⁸

Literature is not translated into Turkmen since the adoption of the new Latin alphabet; and Turkmen books are not published in other languages – for instance, the new president's books are not translated into minority languages. Classics are available, only in Russian and in limited numbers. Books in other languages (usually Russian) can be purchased in limited amounts and from private vendors, but much less than 5 to 6 years ago, as foreign literature is usually subject to severe import restrictions. Sometimes it is hard to find even fairy-tales in Russian, let alone the languages of other ethnic minorities.

Cultural institutions

All cinemas show films only in the state language. Until recently the Pushkin State Drama Theatre was the only theatre with performances in Russian. This situation has been gradually changing with the new director, who decided to transform the Russian theatre into Turkmen.

UZBEKISTAN

Formal regulations

Regulations governing use of Uzbek language in radio and TV exist. These regulations are observed quite strictly on TV but to a lesser extent on radio and in the print media.

Television

State television has four channels, each differing in coverage, broadcasting language and content. Channel Uzbekistan is the primary channel with an emphasis on all government activities, speeches, and public events. It broadcasts in Uzbek, except for newcasts in Russian. Channel 2 is called 'Yoshlar', or Youth Channel. It covers half the country. Although the channel is intended to compete with Channel Uzbekistan, its coverage, apart from some emphasis on 'entertainment for youth' features political events like presidential and parliamentary elections, political events, and talk shows on political and economic issues. The channel broadcasts both in Uzbek (70–80%) and Russian. Channels 3 and 4 are

³⁸ TIHR (Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights) Report: On Freedom in Mass Media, freedom of speech and right to access information in Turkmenistan. Vienna, September 2008, p. 10.

entertainment-oriented with films and sports; Channel 3, also known as Toshkent because of its coverage focused on Tashkent, sometimes creates its own programmes. Both channels broadcast in Uzbek and Russian, approximately 60%/40% respectively. Virtually all foreign productions are dubbed, usually in Russian.

It is interesting to note the proportion of the viewership watching transmissions in different languages. According to one survey, 4% of respondents watch TV programmes only in Uzbek; in Uzbek and Tajik 5%; Uzbek and Russian 70%; only in Russian 21%.³⁹

State television, which was predominantly dependent on the re-transmission of Russian programmes in its first few years, has reduced the re-transmission hours of Russian channels like ORT and RTR. At present, foreign channels are not broadcast in Uzbekistan. However, several Russian channels and a Korean channel (KBS) are available via the largest cable TV provider 'Kamalak', with as many as 14 Russian channels and international channels including (CNN, Euronews, Korean channel KBS, and Discovery). The website www.pressreference.com estimates the number of satellite subscribers at about 25,000.⁴⁰

Print media

Approximately 30–40% of newspapers and magazines in Tashkent are in Russian.⁴¹ A survey also indicates that 4% of respondents read newspapers and magazines only in Uzbek, 6% only in Uzbek and Tajik, 45% in Uzbek and Russian, 43% only in Russian, 0.3% in Uzbek and English, 1% in Russian and English, and 0.7% only in Tajik.⁴²

It is estimated that 90–95% of books sold in Uzbekistan are in Russian; and that some 80 to 85% of the books in Uzbek use the Cyrillic script.⁴³

Cultural institutions

Between 2000 and 2008, six festivals of Russian poetry were held in Tashkent. Poets from Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and the USA participated, in addition to poets from Uzbekistan. Film festivals of various countries (Italy, the USA, France etc.) are also a regular occurrence. Films are shown in the original language in a cinema in the centre of Tashkent during these festivals. Russian theatres still perform in the country: 10 out of 37 theatres give their performances in Russian only, or in Russian and Uzbek.

³⁹ Ruben Nazaryan, 'Yazikovaya situatsia v Uzbekistane: Realnost i perspektivy', <<http://mapryal.russkoeslovo.org/content/>> (accessed 26 March 2010).

⁴⁰ <http://www.pressreference.com/Uz-Z/Uzbekistan.html> (accessed 28 March 2010).

⁴¹ Omar Sharafov, 'Latinizatsiya alfavita. Uzbekskiy opit', www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=5092

⁴² Ruben Nazaryan, 'Yazikovaya situatsia v Uzbekistane: Realnost i perspektivy', <http://mapryal.russkoeslovo.org/content/> (accessed 26 March 2010).

⁴³ Omar Sharafov, 'Latinizatsiya alfavita. Uzbekskiy opit', www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=5092 (accessed 8 October 2010)