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### IMPLEMENTATION OF TRILINGUAL EDUCATION IN KAZAKHSTAN: REVIEW OF PECULIARITIES AND DIFFICULTIES

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

Global changes in the modern world of economy, politics, culture and education impose more attraction to multilingualism. Multilingual members of the society outnumber monolingual speakers in the world's population, and the first group is constantly and rapidly growing. This article is an attempt to shed light on the process of trilingual education implementation which is now being introduced in Kazakhstan at all levels of education. Firstly, the authors highlight the main motives for choosing Kazakh, Russian and English as the target languages for the "Cultural Project of Trilingualism". They offer a brief outline of the historical development of multilingualism in the country and characterize the language policy of trilingualism pursued in Kazakhstan now. The article explores some peculiarities of trilingual education in Kazakhstan in comparison with other multilingual countries. Furthermore, the authors dwell on the main difficulties and give recommendations for successful implementation of trilingual education in the country.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The year 2007 announced the beginning of the phased introduction of the "Cultural Project of Trilingualism". Its implementation assumed the formation of a new generation of Kazakhstani citizens speaking three languages: Kazakh – as the state (and official) language, Russian – as the language of interethnic and international communication, English – as the language of successful integration into the global economy and culture.

The language policy of trilingualism in Kazakhstan is aimed at the formation and development of competitiveness of both the country and its citizens. The successful implementation of this language policy implies that the Kazakh language as the state language should act as a major factor of strengthening

national unity while preserving the original culture of all the ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan. The Russian language in this triad seeks first of all to promote the unity of various social and ethnic groups within the state, and secondly, to act as a tool of intercultural communication and international cooperation with strategically important partners in the post-Soviet countries.

While analyzing the characteristic features of the language situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan it should be noted that "exoglossia of the language situation is not determined by 126 languages which may appear to be evident at first sight. Actually, the referent ethnic groups of 124 languages (excluding the Kazakh and the Russian) account for only 13.2% of the population of the country and therefore the language situation is clearly centered around the two important communicative languages – the Kazakh language and the Russian language" (Suleimenova, 2011).

English, which is neither typologically, nor historically nor geographically connected with the Kazakh language, was included in the triad of these languages for the reason that at this stage of historical development the dominant language on the planet is no doubt English, the so-called lingua-franca. English is the medium of instruction at many schools and colleges all over the world. English is also extensively used in the field of research, internet communication, business, social domains and personal relationships. And it is a well-known fact that success in many areas of advanced technologies and acquisition of new knowledge can be gained through the mastery of dominant languages.

In our review of the language education in Kazakhstan we addressed "The State program for the development and functioning of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020", "The Roadmap of Trilingual Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2015-2020", "A Single Language Standard of Learning Three Languages" as they document the strategy and focus of the state policy aimed at the development of multilingual society and formation of "linguistic capital of every citizen of Kazakhstan" consisting of the three components (or three target languages): Kazakh-Russian-English.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The aims of the given paper are to investigate main peculiarities of Kazakhstani trilingual policy and dwell on the difficulties in the process of trilingual education implementation in the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to make recommendations that build on current successes and address major obstacles or challenges being faced by the educators at all levels of education and language policy makers in Kazakhstan.

In our review we applied theoretical methods such as critical analysis of pedagogical and methodological literature on the theme of research and historical analysis of the origins of multilingualism in Kazakhstan taking into account specific historical facts and events.

It is crucial to understand the characteristic features of the language policy in Kazakhstan and its involvement in the processes caused by the spread of new communication types, modern information technologies, international business, world science, international education within the context of globalization. To have a better understanding of trilingual policy in Kazakhstan we need not only to clearly understand the basic notions of trilingualism and

trilingual education, but also to know the historical background of the development of multilingualism in the country.

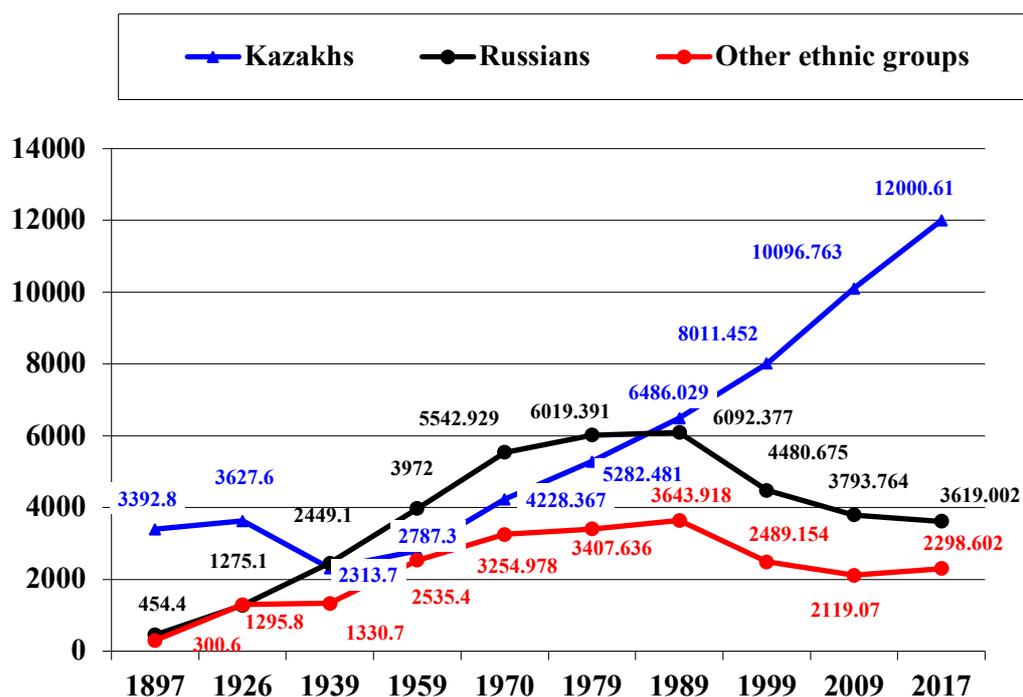
Over two hundred years the ethnic diversity of the population in Kazakhstan substantially changed due to the growing migration. There was an increase of the following ethnic groups (Diaspora) - Russian, Uzbek, Ukrainian, Uighur, Tatar, German, Korean, Belarusian, and others. On the one hand Kazakhstan has ceased to be ethnically homogeneous. On the other hand, ethnically, culturally and linguistically now it has approached Russia, as all the 126 languages spoken in Kazakhstan are spoken in Russia as well (Suleimenova et al., 2007). However, such multi-ethnicity in Russia has not led to a linguistic disaster, as was the catastrophic situation with the Kazakh language in the mid-twentieth century.

Also due to some historical events the language which held the position of the main, dominant language may lose its status and then a former second language may become dominant. Thus, the rapid demographic changes of the last twenty years (ethnic repatriation, migration from the country) allowed painless and systematic government regulation of language policy ensuring priority development of the Kazakh language as the state language, changes in the proportion of the spoken and learned languages. The Kazakh language became dominant and now it receives the support of both the government and the Kazakhstani society.

Population dynamics in Kazakhstan according to ethnic groups (1897-2017)

To trace all the changes in the ethnic composition of the population in Kazakhstan within the period of 1897-2017 we used the official statistical information retrieved from the official website of the Agency of statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Monography "Ethno-linguistic processes in Kazakhstan (Altynbekova, 2006).

Based on the population census conducted in different years Figure 1 presents the official statistical data on the ethnic composition of the population in Kazakhstan and allows to trace the population dynamics in the country according to ethnic groups (Kazakhs, Russians and others) over the last 120 years from 1897 to 2017.



**Figure 1**

Population dynamics in the Republic of Kazakhstan according to ethnic groups within the period of 1897-2017 (in thousands of people)

Other ethnic groups in Figure 1 include: Koreans, Germans, Tatars, Uighurs, Ukrainians, Uzbeks and many other smaller ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan. The data should be read in thousands of people. Thus 12000, 61 means 12 000 610.

Language policy of trilingualism in Kazakhstan in comparison with other multilingual countries

Language policy in the EU countries aims at supporting multilingualism, developing multilingual and multicultural personalities being able to speak at least two languages other than their mother tongue or first language. When the country is characterized by a multilingual communication the authorities can officially allow providing educational services in the language of an ethnic minority in the places of their primary residence.

The traditions of multilingualism and cultural pluralism were also developed in Belgium and Canada. Despite the declaration of official bilingualism in Canada and Belgium, political stability in these countries is achieved due to the dominance of one language which is spoken by the political and economic elite. Although in 1867 Canada officially recognized two state-forming nations, the English language has always dominated over the French language. The territorial principle of language arrangement also exists in Canada. Likewise, in Belgium, despite the declaration of official bilingualism in 1898, the French language has always dominated the Flemish language (Marusenko, 2015).

Kazakhstani trilingualism differs from official quadrilingualism in Switzerland, trilingualism in Belgium and Canada in the way that trilingualism in Kazakhstan (with the three target languages – Kazakh, Russian and English) is given officially full acknowledgement throughout the country and is mandatory for

the whole society without exception, in all spheres of life, and first of all in education.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has also established an effective system of state support of languages of ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan. So in secondary schools in Kazakhstan one can notice a great ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. Students of 23 different ethnic groups attend Kazakhstani secondary schools. Among them ethnic Kazakhs account for 73% of the students, ethnic Russians - 14%, ethnic Uzbeks - 4%. Other national minorities reflect population movements that took place in the period of the Soviet Union, and include: Uyghurs (1.5 percent), Ukrainians (1.3%), Germans (1.0%). Secondary school students are educated in one of the two official languages (Kazakh or Russian) or in other minority languages. According to the educational statistics for 2014-2015 during this period in Kazakhstan functioned 7222 public full-time secondary schools. Of the total number 3 794 schools were schools with the Kazakh language of instruction, 1 291 - schools with the Russian language as a medium of instruction, 2 100 - schools with the mixed language of instruction, i.e. Kazakh and Russian. There also functioned 20 schools with the Uzbek language of instruction, 13 schools with the Uighur language of instruction and 4 schools with the Tajik language of instruction. In 29 schools there have been introduced classes with the instruction in the native language of the ethnic groups: Chechen, Azerbaijani, Dungan, Polish, Kurdish, Turkish and others. (Secondary education in Kazakhstan: status and prospects. Analytical collection, 2015).

Thus, we conclude that in each polylingual state trilingualism has its own peculiar features:

- The territorial principle of trilingual division in Canada, Bashkiria (in Russia);
- Official quadrilingualism in Switzerland;
- Hierarchical principle of trilingual division (Belgium, Canada);
- Trilingualism based on the unity of the three target languages (Kazakhstan).

Language policy is inextricably connected with the changes and improvement of the educational policy. It should be noted that according to priority areas, the basis of language education in Kazakhstan is linguistic and cultural pluralism, aimed at training and educating not only a three- or multi-lingual, but also a multicultural personality, which has a developed sense of understanding and respect for other cultures, capable of effective self-realization and productive professional activity in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environment, preserving their ethnic self-determination in the conditions of cultural diversity of society. The basis for the formation of such a multicultural personality is trilingualism.

The goal of trilingual education proceeds from the state language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is focused on the following tasks:

- to achieve acquisition of the Kazakh language by 100% of graduates;
- to retain and increase achievements of the population in the knowledge of the Russian language, which are determined by the objective historical factors in Kazakhstan;
- to increase the proficiency in the third language (English), adding to the historically existing Kazakh-Russian bilingualism as a means of integration into the world community.

In accordance with the international standards the main goal of trilingual

education is to create the necessary conditions (or essential prerequisites) for the simultaneous acquisition of the three target languages by Kazakhstani citizens (A Single Language Standard of Learning Three Languages, 2016).

The first universities to implement trilingual education in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2008 were Karaganda State University named after academician E.A. Buketov (Karaganda) and Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages (in Almaty).

In 2009 on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan a group of authors from Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, including the co-author of the article professor Kulyash K. Duisekova, and under the guidance of academician Salima S. Kunanbayeva developed the "Concept of language education of Kazakhstan" (2010) and the State Educational Standard of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Languages of three-unity" (2010) as a unified universal system of multilingual education management in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In 2011 on the basis of the approved State Educational Standard of languages the above-mentioned university developed and introduced into practice educational Programs on the target languages in order to control and provide methodological coordination of teaching Kazakh, Russian and English in the universities of Kazakhstan.

In general, the introduction of trilingual education in Kazakhstani schools follows the example and experience of 33 experimental schools for gifted children, 20 Nazarbayev intellectual schools (NIS) and 30 Kazakh-Turkish lyceums.

The model of early (full and partial) language immersion into the Kazakh language is implemented at Nazarbayev intellectual schools in specialized classes. In these classes primary school students are completely immersed into the Kazakh language learning within their first and second years at school. In their second year (second semester) they begin to learn the Russian language, in their third year they begin to learn English.

According to the policy of trilingual education and taking into consideration the experience of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools since 2017/2018 academic year some subjects are taught to senior high school students in Kazakh, English and Russian: in the Kazakh language - "History of Kazakhstan", "Kazakhstan in the modern world", "Geography"; in Kazakh and Russian respectively – "Courses of integrated literature and language" (L1, L2); in L1 (Kazakh or Russian) depending on the language of instruction - "Mathematics", "Graphics and design»; in L3 (English) - "Physics", "Chemistry", "Biology", "Computer science", "Economics", "Global prospects and project work"(NIS-Program, 2017).

Higher education institutions of Kazakhstan implementing the programs of trilingual education carry out the planning and organization of educational activities in three languages: language of instruction (L1), second language (L2) and English (L3). It is planned to teach 50% of subjects in the language L1 (Kazakh or Russian), 20% of subjects in the second language L2 (Russian or Kazakh, respectively) and 30% of subjects in English (L3).

In connection with the transition to updated content of education, it is planned to modernize the content of university educational programs. So, in 2017-2018 academic year 15 basic universities of Kazakhstan began pre-service teacher training in 4 pedagogical specialties (degree programs in Natural Sciences and

Mathematics) in the English language. New educational programs, textbooks and teaching materials for higher educational institutions will be developed in the English language.

It is planned to further develop national textbooks and teaching materials for language subjects in accordance with the developed unified language standard for teaching the three target languages (A Single Language Standard of Learning Three Languages, 2016), which will ensure the achievement of a new quality of learning technologies, the development of modern teaching and scientific-pedagogical base. It is also planned to adapt foreign textbooks and teaching materials in English in four subjects (computer science, physics, chemistry and biology) for high school students (The State Program for Education and Science Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2019).

Currently the training is conducted entirely in English at Nazarbayev University, the International University of Information Technologies, Kazakh-British Technical University, KIMEP University.

Thorough analysis, consolidation and generalization of the existing works and best practices in the field of intercultural communication theory, development of Kazakhstani model of Modern Foreign Language education by academician Salima S. Kunanbayeva (2005) became an important step forward. Thus, Salima S. Kunanbayeva defined the cognitive linguocultural methodology as the methodological basis of Modern Foreign Language education. And the theory of intercultural communication was defined as the educational paradigm of language and foreign language education in Kazakhstan.

In the methodology developed by Salima S. Kunanbayeva (2005) the language is understood as an interdisciplinary construct "language-culture-personality"; the subject boundaries of the language are extended to the level of "language education"; the category of "linguoculture" is defined as the methodological basis of the theory of foreign language education; the final learning outcome in the FL teaching is the formation of intercultural competence and the ability to intercultural communication in a person (personality), which as a competent subject of such interaction is defined as the "subject of intercultural communication".

On the basis of the well-known Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) and integrated with the model of vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL) Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages developed the National (Kazakhstani) adapted standard levels of language competences which aim at assigning and assessing levels of language proficiency in the required language (foreign, Kazakh, Russian, and others).

Thus, the National adapted standard levels of language competences (or the National Standard Scale of the language competence levels) include:

1. The Minimum Acceptable Level or the First National standard level (I-NS). It corresponds to European levels A1 (Elementary level) and A2 (Pre-Intermediate level);
2. The Basic Level or the Second National standard level (II-NS). It corresponds to European level B1 (Intermediate level);
3. The Standard Level or the Third National standard level (III-NS). It is equivalent to European level B2 (Upper-Intermediate level);

4. The Higher Standard Level or the Fourth National standard level (IV-NS). It corresponds to European levels C1 (Advanced) and C2 (Mastery);

5. The Highest Achievable Level, the Fifth National standard level (V-NS) or level C3. It can be achieved only in learning native languages. There is an argument against including level C3 into the National scale, but the development of this level is essential and necessary for the learning of a native language in all its rich diversity of usage.

All these levels are adapted to the peculiarities of the National educational system and are implemented in the following way:

□ Learners of Kazakh and Russian as native languages can acquire the proficiency in these languages at the levels A1-C3.

□ For Kazakh and Russian as a second language the number of levels is reduced and the maximum achievable language proficiency level for such learners in the conditions of primary school is level B1. The highest achievable proficiency level is C2 and it is typical for postgraduate education.

□ Learners of a foreign language begin from the starting (zero) level of the program given the lack of favorable language environment and conditions. In connection with this the duration of the levels can be prolonged. Thus in the context of vocational education learners begin with the B2 level. The maximum achievable levels in a specific language education are B2, C1, C2 levels with the possibility of certification for IELTS (European standard) or American TOEFL + 2 professional language programs: LAP (Language for academic purposes) and LSP (Language for specific purposes).

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

Objective realities of our time demonstrate that in Kazakhstani society there is a considerable interest to learn languages and gradual shift towards plurilingualism.

On the one hand today we can speak about visible progress in the development of trilingualism and implementation of the “Cultural Project of Trilingualism” resulting in:

1. the developed laws and regulations governing the “Cultural Project of Trilingualism”;
2. the development of the general conceptual basis of language education in the Republic of Kazakhstan which is reflected in the State standard of language education.

On the other hand, while implementing trilingual education we will face and will have to overcome many difficulties including the issues of training highly qualified pedagogical personnel for the system of trilingual education, further administrative or pedagogical guidelines which might lead to effective teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, in respect of the developed State standard of language education and its implementation we should note that the unified system of centralized management and language education control concerning all the three target languages and levels in the system of education hasn't been developed properly yet.

The global trend tending to updating of content of education assumes considerable individualization and personalization of the educational process and it means that the needs and requests of the participants of the educational process (or the key stakeholders) should be taken into consideration in planning

and organization of education. Special editions and professional circles do not discuss the fact that not all students are able to study chemistry, physics, biology and other subjects in English.

Among other factors that influence either positively or negatively the implementation of trilingual education, and consequently need special attention and consideration, are the following:

- Motivation;
- Assessment;
- Need for constant language support;
- Educational programs;
- Teacher collaboration;
- Regional features;
- Parents awareness, family support.

Other important questions that need to be answered are the following:

What factors impede successful implementation of trilingual education at all levels of education in Kazakhstan?

In what ways can these barriers be addressed to maximize the potential of the trilingual education policy implementation in the country?

## CONCLUSION

The general trends of multilingual development are inherent to many countries, but their manifestation is individual which is determined by the language policy of each country, its cultural, national and educational traditions.

Kazakhstan is a multilingual country in which the official policy of plurilingualism is based on Kazakhstani trilingualism which includes the three languages of instruction: Kazakh, Russian and English. Some ethnic languages are used as official languages of instruction at ethnic schools, e.g. Uighur, Uzbek, Korean, where the language of instruction depends on the ethnicity of the majority of the population.

The government's trilingual policy was officially declared as mandatory in all territories and for the whole society in general without exception in all spheres of life, and primarily at all levels of education. In Kazakhstan the introduction of trilingual education at all levels of education is stated in the national educational standards, in the legislative acts in the field of education and language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. These official documents define the role and place of trilingual education in Kazakhstan, the principles of development of the effective management system of trilingual education.

As we can conclude Kazakhstani trilingualism is a unique phenomenon that does not fit the generally accepted international framework of language policy, and therefore deserves more careful and thorough study taking into consideration both language and educational policy.

The conducted review helped us to reveal that, on the one hand, implementation of the trilingual education proceeds in accordance with the expected curriculum. On the other hand, factors that directly or indirectly impede successful implementation of trilingual education have also been revealed.

Taking into consideration the experience of foreign and local language educators in multilingual and trilingual education we suggest the following recommendations for further implementation of the language policy of trilingualism in Kazakhstan:

- Achieving mutual understanding of trilingual education policy among local and foreign teachers engaged in trilingual programs in Kazakhstan;
- Developing support mechanisms for learners with low L2 (Kazakh or Russian) such as, for example, intensive Kazakh/Russian language courses before introducing subjects in the second language; intensive summer language courses;
- Increasing learners' motivation to learn Kazakh;
- Increasing L3 acquisition level among local teachers;
- Holding additional workshops on use of CLIL for all teachers;
- Active involvement of foreign teachers to courses conducted for local teachers;
- Seeking a balance between the use of the three target languages within the school environment;
- Development of monitoring mechanism of Kazakh and Russian language acquisition progress (CEFR).

Thus, in the coming years there will be hard and serious work aimed at further implementation of the state strategy in the field of language education and effective organization of the educational process in the three target languages at all levels of education.

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