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LANGUAGE SITUATION: DEFINITION AND RESEARCH APPROACHES

The article explores the structural and content-related aspects of defining a language situation, which is a central category in sociolinguistics. A language situation represents the hierarchy of language use within a specific administrative-territorial unit. As a system, a language situation consists of both permanent elements and variable components. While the elements of a language situation include the spheres of language use, its components are the languages themselves and their forms of existence. This study clarifies the classifications of language situations based on research in this field. The authors describe the language situation in Kazakhstan, relying on theoretical conclusions and established classifications. For the first time, the qualitative aspect of the language situation in Kazakhstan is revealed, identifying the number of languages that constitute the modern linguistic landscape and determining their functional domains. A classification of the actually functioning languages in the country is provided. One of the key issues discussed in the article is the nature of language existence forms, which are considered in sociolinguistics as linguistic states. The authors argue that the use of idioms (languages) encompasses various social spheres, each of which

is served by different forms of language existence. Furthermore, the authors highlight the intensive development of translanguaging in Kazakhstan's language situation, which is vividly manifested in people's speech practices and urban epigraphy.

Keywords: language situation, dominant language, exoglossic/endoglossic language situations, translanguaging, language stratification.

Introduction

As a central category in sociolinguistics, the concept of the linguistic situation began to be thoroughly examined in the 1960s and 1970s, when scholars such as A. Avrorin and L. B. Nikolsky provided its initial definitions and theoretical foundations. A thorough examination of this phenomenon goes beyond the analysis of quantitative data, such as the size of speaker communities and their geographical or social distribution.

The linguistic situation is generally understood as a socially conditioned configuration of languages shaped by demographic factors and language policy [1; 2]. Moreover, the linguistic situation also encompasses minor languages such as dialects, jargons, and speech varieties, as well as functional styles operating within administrative-territorial units and ethnic communities. Importantly, not every set of languages can be defined as a linguistic situation: they must be interconnected within a continuum of social communication, interacting with each other and reflecting the linguistic orientations and attitudes of community members toward the languages spoken in their region [3, p. 133].

According to A. Avrorin, a linguistic situation is a unified structure in which communicative acts are realized through the relationships among its components, incorporating ethnodemographic characteristics and sociolinguistic properties of both the sender and recipient of communication [4, p. 276]. For example, outside the territory of Kazakhstan, the Kazakh language is treated as a foreign language because the local population does not speak it, whereas for Kazakh speakers abroad it functions as a means of intra-ethnic, familial, and interpersonal communication, thereby forming part of the linguistic situation of another country. The same principle applies to the languages of ethnic minorities within Kazakhstan, which historically have been used across diverse domains including family communication, personal interaction, education, culture, and the media.

Uzbek, Uyghur, and Tajik continue to be used in formal educational settings, while languages such as Korean, German, and others are maintained primarily within cultural, community, and heritage-based practices. This distribution highlights one of the key challenges facing contemporary Kazakhstani sociolinguistics: the need to examine the everyday language practices of small

ethnic communities, the dynamics of their language shift, and the ways speakers navigate between native and non-native linguistic codes in different social contexts.

This study is concerned with addressing the analysis of Kazakhstan's linguistic situation concerning processes of national identity formation and the implementation of multilingual language policy. The research focuses its main goals on: explication of the theoretical foundation of the concept of the linguistic situation as proposed within modern sociolinguistics; identification of the primary elements with respect to the linguistic landscape of Kazakhstan; establishment of Kazakh language as an important instrument for building national identity; and the more general sociocultural implications of multilingualism. Kazakhstan's contemporary linguistic situation in its sociolinguistic and cultural dimensions is the object of the research. The research assumes that Kazakh, as a core marker of national identity, is a significant language with dominant status in the linguistic situation of the country and that a multiplicity of languages simultaneously helps to integrate people in society and produces many policy issues. The novelty of this study arises from its 'integrative' approach, in which sociolinguistic analysis and national identity discourses become one for providing a more complex knowledge of the ways multilingualism plays into construction of modern cultural values.

Materials and Methods

The empirical support for this research is based on the summarized results of the Results of the National Population Census 2021 as statistical data. The linguistic situation analysis makes use of a variety of complementary research procedures, such as analytical and synthetic procedures, generalization, and comparative analysis. The methods chosen were informed by the research objectives and acknowledge that the topic under study is multi-dimensional, each method focusing on one feature of the research question. The data was meticulously analyzed and synthesized, so that single language components were located and analysed as part of a larger analytical scheme. The generalization process made it easier to take a more general theoretical position, based on some selected empirical findings in order to secure the internal consistency of the study. Comparative analysis was used to understand linguistic and cultural features across diverse social settings and allowed for uncovering both typical and contextual effects of language use. The relevance of these methods to the object of the study - identifying the structural, semantic and functional aspects of the linguistic situation - justifies their application. Their application also guarantees transparency and reproducibility of the outcomes, as other scientists going through the same steps of analysis would be able to validate, optimize, or contest the outcomes shown in this article.

Results and Discussion

In sociolinguistics, the linguistic situation is seen as a model for social purposes that both the speaker and listener follow, aligning with the socio-

functional and linguistic hierarchy of socio-communicative systems and subsystems within a specific political-administrative entity or cultural area at a certain time. It also encompasses the linguistic system and subsystems belonging to speech communities, or a set of functionally stratified linguistic units that ensure communication in a particular region or state. The renowned linguist E. G. Tumanyan describes the linguistic situation as the entirety of languages that are functionally interrelated and mutually reinforcing within a single administrative-political and territorial dimension of a state, or as the existential form of a single language [5]. In the linguistic situation of Kazakhstan, the stable elements are actual bilingualism, trilingualism, and multilingualism, such as Kazakh-Russian, mother tongue-Kazakh, mother tongue-Russian, mother tongue-foreign language, mother tongue-Kazakh-Russian, mother tongue-Kazakh-Russian-English, etc. Meanwhile, the elements of the linguistic situation include the languages actively used in communication – Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the lingua franca, and the mother tongues of different ethnic groups residing in Kazakhstan, functioning at various levels for social relations. According to the Results of the National Population Census 2021, Kazakhs make up 70.4 % of the population, Russians 15.5 %, and other groups 14.1 %. The number of people proficient in the Kazakh language and who report their mother tongue is shown in the table below (Table 1*).

Table 1 – Quantitative Indicators of Ethnic Groups' Language Proficiency (2021)

№	Ethnic Groups	Total Population	Mother Tongue	Proficient in Kazakh / Uses Kazakh in Daily Life
1	Kazakhs	13,497,891	13,380,107	11,861,654 / 7,550,482
2	Russians	2,981,946	2,853,224	708,069 / 262,389
3	Uzbeks	614,047	583,456	383,322 / 252,331
4	Ukrainians	387,327	77,258	87,676 / 28,157
5	Uighurs	290,337	247,322	186,661 / 118,271
	Other Ethnic Groups	1,178,527	812,506	541,028 / 199,826

Source: Summary Results of the 2021 National Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan // <https://stat.gov.kz/national/2021/>.

From the functional purpose of language in society, languages are basically of two types. The first includes languages having relatively neutral roles that complement communication in a wide range of social activities. The second category includes languages in this hierarchical structure as communicative space is distributed by hierarchy; this is manifested by placing different languages in communicative space with dissimilar functions in different positions on a scale. In addition to this

typology, wider linguistic formations, often referred to as archisystems, should also be considered. Rooted in ethnic, social, and socio-territorial communities, such systems integrate individual languages and their varieties into a wider linguistic community, where each occupies a particular functional position within the overall linguistic situation [6]. In Kazakhstan, our linguistic situation is determined by the languages that ethnic groups actively use, in both private and public activities [7]. The literary form is largely dominant but different language forms may also exist. It is found in the research done between 2021 and 2023 that the language conditions in Aktobe are influenced by Kazakh and Russian, which function in colloquial, spoken literary, and standard literary forms. Furthermore, the dialectal and vernacular varieties of both languages are also part of the linguistic situation representing a fairly underexplored area in Kazakhstani sociolinguistic research. Currently, it is not reported as to the number of languages available in the country's linguistic situation, but an analysis of their use in different social contexts, including daily oral communication, social and personal interaction, educational, cultural and media contexts, has made it possible to make inferences about the languages in the linguistic situation of Kazakhstan (Table 2) [8].

Table 2 – Classification of Languages in Actual Use in Kazakhstan

Language Type	Languages	Demographic Vitality of the Language	Proficiency in Mother Tongue	Domains of Language Use				
		Ethnic Population	Number of Speakers	Family and Domestic Sphere	Intra-Ethnic Communication	Mass Media	Education Sector	Culture
Widely Spoken	Kazakh	13 497 891	13 380 107/99,12%	X	X	X	X	X
	Russian	2 981 946	2 853 224/95,7%	X	X	X	X	X
Moderately Spoken	Uzbek	614 047	583 456/95,02%	X	X		X	X
	Ukrainian	387 327	77 258/19,%	X	X			X
	Uighur	290 337	247 322/85,2%	X	X		X	X
	German	226 092	77 252/34,2%	X	X			X
	Tatar	218 653	129 314/59,1%	X	X			X
	Azerbaijani	145 615	108 538/74,5%	X	X			X
	Korean	118 450	49 222/42%	X	X			X
	Turkish	85 478	71 935/84,2%	X	X			X
	Dunggan	78 817	74 107/94,02%	X	X			X

Less Spoken	Belarusian	76 484	42 299 / 55,3%	X				X
	Tajik	49 827	45 950 / 92,2%	X			X	X

Note: X indicates the presence of the language in the respective domain.

A linguistic situation can be described as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, depending on how many languages are used as active participants in social communication. Multilingualism is a situation in which a number of languages co-exist in one national-territorial unit, where one language often remains dominant [5, p. 78]. Based on these criteria we may find that between the two or the many languages used in Kazakhstan, both are at different levels of social communication across different domains. At present, Kazakh functions as both the state language and its demographically dominant language.

At the same time, Russian retains significant amounts of communicative weight – as the language of official documentation and in interethnic interaction lingua franca. Recent studies suggest that Russian in Kazakhstan is increasingly becoming diversified, leading to something like the British and American English in terms of both linguistic content. This shift, the result of strong contact with Kazakh, is, at present, most apparent lexically. Recent lexical items also emerge in Russian via mass media, everyday oral conversation and increasingly digital channels, social media and so on. These alterations, and particularly of media titles and language referring to current political and social issues, are relatively under-researched among Kazakhstani sociolinguistics, and need further systematic study [9].

An interconnected system of elements that makes up a linguistic situation, the study of their relationship lays out the groundwork to categorise that system's typology in terms of factors. Several authors have suggested other typological models of linguistic situations, mirroring the range of viewpoints and language settings in which their classification take place.

The terminology used to describe Kazakhstani language situation – exoglossic, endoglossic, balanced, unbalanced – was first coined by L. B. Nikolsky and applied by B. Zh. Kurmanova to the Kazakhstani language situation. By this classification, Kazakhstan's linguistic situation can be stated as exoglossic and unbalanced, with Kazakh and Russian used as two dominant languages [9]. At the same time, it is clear that linguistic conditions cannot be only described by the numbers, and instead need to be understood from dimensions of qualitative data that show how languages are practically working, dealing, and meaning-making within social practice. Qualitative indicators include the linguistic attributes of the languages in the linguistic situation, such as structural and genetic relationships between languages, their functional roles, and their dominance or subordination within a specific context.

Qualitative indicators classify Kazakhstan's linguistic situation as multilingual, consisting of languages that are both genetically related and unrelated. The social domains in which these languages play are also unequal – Kazakh is the local language and Russian the imported language, both serving as dominant languages. Globalization, then, is a great event, and needs to be recognized not just as economic but as a powerful engine for cultural exchange and adaptation. In pursuing economic competitiveness and international integration through the development in cultural traditions, many states simultaneously try to protect their national identity by expanding the use of native languages and culture. With this in mind, Kazakhstan has been proactively designing and shaping a national linguistic environment, to promote the state status of the Kazakh language – the language of the titular nation – and to create a context in which the mother tongue for the nation's various ethnicities can be preserved and developed. This orientation is strongly illustrated by the Concept for the Development of Language Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029, which highlights that Kazakh is the state language codified in the Constitution and its special status is also that of unity (in the sense of being the language of the whole nation, as the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been called its nation language) and that its spiritual and national heritage is supported. Thus, proficiency in the state language in its public and official service is considered to be necessary condition for social cohesion and development of shared civic values. Simultaneously, however, the Concept emphasizes how encouraging interethnic communication can ensure that the linguistic and cultural resources of the ethnic groups are safeguarded and developed which will increase the overall linguistic resource of societies [10]. An important landmark stage of Kazakhstan's language policy was the adoption of the «Trilingual Policy» cultural project, which was first deliberated in 2007 and subsequently implemented in 2009. This work provided the basis for the institutionalization of trilingualism (Kazakh, Russian, and English), which was further strengthened by the 2010 Concept for Language Education and the State Compulsory Standard for Higher Education [10]. This idea and standard goal is to develop an integrated system of linguistic education that is universal, which would be using the trilingual model (Kazakh, Russian, and English) as a platform, with a common scientific-theoretical base, but with the domestic and international education modes. This idea and standard today underpin the multilingual education of the higher education system by trying constantly to train specialists who speak three languages.

The branches of education, the internet, and visual media contribute simultaneously to Kazakh-English, Russian-English, mother tongue-Russian, and mother tongue-Kazakh bilingualism. Additionally, Kazakh-Russian-English, Russian-Kazakh-English, mother tongue-Russian-English, and mother

tongue-Kazakh-English trilingualism have also developed. The phenomenon of translanguaging has begun to emerge among students according to some studies. Based on the study of students' use of code-switching in spontaneous conversations, frequent use of Russian words such as *literatura*, *klassika*, *den'* *studentov*, *starosta*, *vecherinka*, *fotosessiya*, *nedelya*, *ponedel'nik*, *chai*, *slyakot'*, *pal'to*, etc., and English borrowings like *ok*, *like*, *trend*, *look*, *fashion girl*, *quiz*, *PlayStation*, *please*, *vine*, etc., were identified. In addition, oral language practices have led to the emergence and use of hybrid words that integrate multiple languages. For example, some words have roots originating in Russian or English but show Kazakh affixes, while others have roots in the Kazakh background but have Russian suffixes and inflections. This mixed word construction illustrates the phenomenon of emergent language use in language interactions within spontaneous student speech and is consistent with translanguaging. We observe in practice how grammatically hybrid Russian-Kazakh and English-Kazakh units of speech can be heard in the form of units occurring in different parts of speech. These forms are nouns (*dietada* 'on a diet'; *ostanovkadan* 'from the bus stop'; *kvartirantaryng* 'your tenants'; *komuslugalaryn* 'their utility bills'; *vaindar* 'vines'; *temadan* 'from the topic'; *laiktyryn* 'their likes'; *doktordan* 'from the doctor'), numerals (*shestoyda* 'on the sixth'), adjectives (*khuden'kayasy* 'you are skinny'), and verbs (*zvondangdarsh* 'call him/her') [11]. They demonstrate that translanguaging becomes a feature of Kazakhstan's current linguistic condition at an organic level of spontaneous dialogue, as speakers integrate linguistic assets from a variety of languages spontaneously in interaction, rather than as an occasional or marginal phenomenon. Another key shaping factor for the linguistic landscape of Kazakhstan in this contemporary era is urban epigraphy, which is regarded as the totality of written inscriptions present in public space – on street signs, commercial façades, advertisements, walls, and other urban surfaces. In linguistic landscape analysis, urban epigraphy is analyzed as an explicit point of contact between language policy and everyday language use. The multilingual nature of writings in the streets and urban areas in the urban context results from language preferences for certain communicative orders and the degree to which certain lexicon is symbolic for specific social groups. Both official and unofficial written forms of communication are included in the urban linguistic landscape. Official inscriptions include street name plaques, road signs, information boards, memorial plaques, commercial signage, posters, and billboards, while unofficial text appears in the form of announcements and handwritten notices, graffiti slogans, and temporary placards. The systematic examination of urban epigraphy allows for the discovery of processes that either promote the development of languages or alternatively constrict their functional domains. It offers analytical tools for

addressing phenomena described by authorities as «linguistic vandalism» and also offers strategies for regulating visual language use in public space.

On a regional basis, urban epigraphy represents a significant part of the linguistic context, where such aesthetic practices expand the availability of some languages while diminishing the communicative space in others. This is especially exemplified by instances such as Kazakh, Russian, and English social use in urban commercial contexts. More and more hybrid business names are becoming popular in sectors including catering, retail, pharmacies, beauty salons, and dental clinics. Examples include «Auyz tea», «Ай Luna» (Ai Luna), «Балапанчик» (Balapanchik), «My tandir», «TANDIR HOUSE», «Bauyrsaq Qazaq Fastfood», «Keruen City», «AQTOBE MALL», «Әлия Center» (Aliya Center), «NAZY flowers», «Ademi Kids», «I'm Sulu», «NUR SKIN», «NazBrows», «OTBASypharm», «Nurpharm», «Aktau-Nur Farm», «DOS SMILE», «Sapa Dent», and «Шипа DENT» (Shipa DENT) [12].

Since translanguaging employs versatile linguistic resources in the field of social and cognitive activities, the way in which language mixing works in practical, functional, and pragmatic terms is particularly relevant to investigate [13]. Lexical features are often freely linked, but linguistic inflection points are quite consistent [14]. But also certain shifts – as in, between the formal Kazakh *siz* and informal *sen* (irrespective of being either of age or geographic position) – represent change in old social norms and cultural norms. It then follows that translanguaging analysis is mainly oriented on functional and pragmatic aspects of language mixture, the greater adoption of the new translanguaging paradigm in the field of linguistic situation studies significantly enlarges the analytical horizon for studying bilingual and multilingual speech activities as acts of creative linguistic praxis.

On the whole, it reveals that the linguistic situation of Kazakhstan is influenced by a combination of relatively stable elements (bilingualism and multilingualism) and variable components (linguistic systems that operate in different social forms). The Kazakh language remains a universal point of national identity and Russian is also a *lingua franca* for inter-ethnic communication. At the same time, translanguaging practices between Kazakh, Russian, and English indicate a new era in the country during its sociolinguistic evolution, closely linked to globalization processes and the restructuring of urban communicative spaces. Translanguaging and urban epigraphy – which have drawn more attention now than ever before – and also highlight the ongoing reconfiguration of the linguistic landscape of Kazakhstan – underline the necessity of more sociolinguistic study into this emerging phenomenon.

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Conclusion

We regard the linguistic situation as a dynamic network, a transparent and evolving social dynamic under the impact of social change and language policy related to the particular administrative-territorial context. Instead, stability develops through a dynamic relationship between stable and variable elements as constructed on the basis of demographic, communicative and sociocultural aspects. From this perspective, both bilingualism and multilingualism are crucial structural features of modern linguistic situations, particularly through the lens of translanguaging and its materialization in the context of everyday communication. Today, translanguaging in current-day Kazakhstan manifests in speakers activating the full spectrum of their communicative repertoires, which allows for conversations between languages to develop and cultures to co-create; however, does so on the contrary, also creating potential symbolic fissures.

The study results demonstrate that the linguistic situation in Kazakhstan is characterized by the coexistence of long-standing motifs – most significantly, Kazakh's central function in national identity construction and the role of Russian as the lingua franca – contrasted with contemporary changes in translanguaging processes and urban epigraphy, and the emerging impact of English. The trend of multilingual development is not coincident. Rather, this is evidence that Kazakhstan's language is growing ever more complex and more diverse. These findings suggest that more interdisciplinary research is required to understand more specifically how multilingualism and translanguaging structure language policy, cultural assimilation, and national identity in today's world.

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ТІЛДІК ЖАҒДАЯТ: АНЫҚТАМАСЫ ЖӘНЕ ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖОЛДАРЫ

Мақалада әлеуметтік лингвистикада орталық категория болып табылатын тілдік жағдаяттың анықтамасының құрылымдық-мазмұндық қыры ашылады. Тілдік жағдаят – белгілі бір әкімшілік-аумақтық бірліктегі тілдердің қолданылу иерархиясы. Ал тілдік жағдаят жүйе ретінде өзінің тұрақты элементтері мен өзгермелі компоненттеріне ие және ол элементтерді тілдердің қолданыс аялары құраса, өзгермелі компоненттерін тілдер құрайды. Сондай-ақ ұсынылып отырған мақалада тілдік жағдаяттың жіктемелері осы саладағы зерттеулердің негізінде нақтыланып көрсетіледі. Авторлар тілдік жағдаят туралы теориялық тұжырымдар мен жіктемелерге сүйене отырып, Қазақстанның тілдік жағдаятына сипаттама

береді. Ең алғаш рет еліміздің тілдік жағдаятының сапалық қыры ашылып, бүгінгі күнгі тілдік жағдаятты құрайтын тілдердің саны анықталып, олардың қолданыс салалары айқындалады. Сонда елдегі шынайы қолданыстағы тілдер өздерінің салалық қолданыстарына қарай жіктеліп кең тараған, орташа тараған, аз тараған тілдер деп жіктелген. Мақалада тағы бір қызығушылық тудыратын мәселе – тілдік жағдаятпен қатар әлеуметтік лингвистикада тілдік жай-күй деп қарастырылатын тілдердің өмір сүру формасының еліміздегі сипаты. Авторлар тілдердің қолданыс аясы жеке қарым-қатынастан бастап әлеуметтегі әр түрлі ірі және кіші салаларды қамтитыны, ал өмір сүру формасына келетін болсақ, көбіне олардың әдеби формасы қолданылатыны туралы айта келе, кейбір тасымалдаушысы аз тілдің диалект немесе говор формасының да ауыз екі сөйлеуде қолданылып жатқаны туралы пікір айтады. Сондай-ақ мақалада бүгінгі күнгі қазақстандық тілдік жағдаятта жаңа құбылыстардың пайда болып жатқаны айтылады. Сондай жаңа құбылыс ретінде транслингвизм құбылысының тұрғындардың сөйлеу тәжірибелерінде, қала эпиграфикасында жедел дамып жатқаны туралы айтылады.

Кілтті сөздер: тілдік жағдаят, доминантты тіл, экзоглоты/эндоглоты тілдік жағдаяттар, транслингвизм, тілдік стратификация.

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ЯЗЫКОВАЯ СИТУАЦИЯ: ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ И НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

В статье раскрываются структурные и содержательные аспекты определения языковой ситуации, которая является центральной категорией социолингвистики. Языковая ситуация – это иерархия использования языков в конкретной административно-

территориальной единице. Языковая ситуация как система имеет свои постоянные элементы и переменные компоненты. Если элементами языковой ситуации является сферы использования языков, то компонентами выступают сами языки и их формы существования. В представленной статье уточняются классификации языковой ситуации на основе исследований в этой области. Авторы описывают языковую ситуацию в Казахстане, основываясь на теоретических выводах и классификациях языковой ситуации. Впервые раскрыт качественный аспект языковой ситуации в нашей стране, определено количество языков, составляющих современную языковую ситуацию, выявлены сферы их использования. Проведена классификация реально функционирующих языков в стране. Одним из вызывающих интерес вопросов, раскрытых в статье является характер формы существования языков, который рассматривается в социолингвистике как языковое состояние. Авторы утверждают, что использование идиом (языков) охватывает разные социальные сферы, которые обслуживаются различными формами их существования. Также авторами отмечаются, что в языковой ситуации Казахстана интенсивно развивается явление транслингвизма, который ярко проявляется в речевой практике населения и городской эпиграфике.

Ключевые слова: языковая ситуация, доминирующий язык, экзогlossные/эндогlossные языковые ситуации, транслингвизм, языковая стратификация.

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