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## **Multilingualism and the Current Language Situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to review modern research in the field of multilingualism in terms of the main problems and issues related to the definition of the concept of multilingualism, and its main types and elements. The article discusses various forms of the existence of multilingualism and discusses the problems associated with various scientific ideas about multilingualism, a multilingual individual, and its main characteristics. An analysis of the language situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan is also carried out based on the results of the population census 2021, features of the functioning, and interaction of languages in the multinational Republic of Kazakhstan. The article contains quantitative data related to the composition of the population; the level of proficiency in the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages as well as the language of their ethnic group; the level of trilingual proficiency of the population (Kazakh, Russian, and English); the specifics of the development of the state language on the Internet, etc.

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## 1. Introduction

The modern stage of development of linguistic science is characterized by the increasing attention of researchers to such a phenomenon as multilingualism. Multilingualism in the modern world has acquired a massive character and has a variety of forms of existence. The European Commission defines multilingualism as the ability of societies, organizations, groups, and individuals to incorporate more than one language into their daily lives (European Commission, 2007). Multilingualism is a powerful resource that allows people to interact more effectively (Vakhtin & Golovko, 2004), which causes increased interest in it from linguists, sociolinguists, and psycholinguists. The authors of modern studies of multilingualism are increasingly noting that the current state of society can no longer be characterized in terms of monolingualism since it has long been bi- and multilingual, and the phenomenon of multilingualism itself has become the norm rather than the exception (Edwards, 1994).

The world's population communicates in almost 7,000 languages (Lewis, 2009), while multilingualism is not only much more common than previously thought but also belongs to the group of such phenomena, the study of which has an impact on the development of all social and human sciences, including Linguistics. According to Auer and Wei (2007), just a century ago, European society identified itself as monolingual, within which each individual European language was associated with only one ethnic group (according to the principle "one language - one ethnic group"). At the same time, multilingualism was perceived as a deviation from the generally accepted norm, as opposed to the stability and sustainability of contacting language systems. Population migrations, as well as cultural, trade, military, etc., contacts, gave rise to the so-called "unnatural" language contact and the "violations" of the usual "linguistic order", which led to a structural simplification of the contacting languages (Auer & Wei, 2007). Perhaps this idea of multilingualism was why for almost the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, the studies of language contacts were carried out within the monolingual paradigm, from the standpoint of which

monolingualism was considered a basic concept. It can be assumed that the interpretation of the concept of bilingualism in the domestic linguistic tradition was largely formed under the influence of the European system of views on multilingualism.

The processes of globalization at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the formation of the European Union in 1992, the openness of borders between European countries, and the possibility of getting a job and higher education abroad led to an increase in the number of studies of the coexistence and interaction of languages both in some social groups and among individuals. Moreover, there has been a shift in emphasis from bilingualism as the leading form of interlingual interaction to multilingualism, understood as an integral component and direct consequence of the processes described above.

From the point of view of the multilingual approach, a multilingual individual is not just a sum of several monolinguals, but a unique lingo-cognitive configuration, the study of which requires special complex research methods (Grosjean, 1995). Different directions and schools represented in modern linguistics interpret the term multilingualism/polylingualism in different ways. Each researcher proposes definitions of multilingualism that most closely correlate with their area of research, so none of the known definitions can be considered universal. The fact that multilingualism is considered not only within the framework of Linguistics but also in Psychology, Sociology, Linguodidactics, and other social sciences only emphasizes its multifaceted nature and justifies the multiplicity of its definitions.

Currently, there are languages of different ethnic groups in Kazakhstan as a multinational state, and their use occupies an important place in the development of ethnic culture. In order to create a harmonious language policy that ensures the full-scale use of the state language as the most important factor in strengthening national unity with the preservation of the languages of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan, the state program for the implementation of language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan is being implemented. The study of the implementation of language policy in Kazakhstan is part of the state

program for the development and implementation of languages. In 2021, a public opinion survey was conducted on topical issues of language policy. This article aims to study the language situation with the participation of the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which analysis is based on the materials obtained during the population census.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Defining Multilingualism

Multilingualism is formed on the basis of bilingualism, which, in turn, is created on the basis of monolingualism. A lot of works are devoted to the study of types of bilingualism and multilingualism (Azmi et al., 2020; Català-Oltra et al., 2023; Cenoz, 2013; Grosjean, 2010; Othman, 2020), one of the main tasks of which is the disclosure of such concepts as mother tongue, second language, monolingualism, bilingualism, multilingualism, etc. These concepts have not yet received an unambiguous definition in Linguistics. The concept of the mother tongue is explicated ambiguously. Mother tongue is defined as the language learned in childhood, the skills of which are largely retained into adulthood. Such an understanding does not reflect the relationship of the native language with the ethnic language of a person. The native language is also understood as the first language acquired by a person in childhood (the language of the cradle or the language of the mother) (Belikov & Krysin, 2016).

According to Avrorin (1975), native language should be recognized as the language that a given person or group of people is fluent in (within limits available for a given age and level of education), no worse than any other (when there is knowledge of more than one language), and use fluently and actively in all cases of life - not only speak, understand but also think, without resorting to the mental operation of translation into another language. According to Akhmanova (2004), the content of the mother tongue is revealed as the name of a language learned in early childhood by imitation of surrounding adults. Weinreich (1979) believes that the criteria by which a language is defined as dominant are numerous: the degree of language proficiency, the order of study, and the speaker's attitude to this

language - and all of them must be taken into account. For Weinreich (1979), the mother tongue is the language that is learned first. In many literary sources on Linguistics and among people, the criterion for determining the mother tongue is the ethnicity of a person. Each person considers the native language of the nationality to which he belongs. The discrepancy between the native language and the ethnic group indicates the presence of a factor of linguistic assimilation from the change of the native language. Khasanov (1992) states that the change in the native language is the loss of the most precious - the spiritual source of human life.

Mother tongue is any natural living language that differs in its internal structure from all other languages existing in the world and historically belongs to a specific ethnic group (tribe, nationality, people, or nation), regardless of its size, fixed in its ethnic consciousness, used by it in various spheres of life (at least in family and everyday communication) to fully satisfy ethnic needs, a primordial common remedy for all members of an ethnic group, without distinction of the place of residence, gender, age, religion, beliefs, profession and occupation, and social and property status (Khasanov, 1992).

Some scholars propose the introduction of the concept of functionally first language, which, according to Ladyzhenskaya and Mikhalskaya (1998), helps to eliminate ambiguity in the concept of native language and allows you to adequately describe any period of language life in the dynamics of its development and differentiate the language situation in a multinational society according to various socio-communicative parameters, as well as such a distinction allows you to define the native language as the language of communication with mother, the language of the first comprehension of the world and awareness of one's "I" in it, the language of connection and unity with one's family, clan, and through it with one's ethnic group.

Mother tongue is a mandatory component of bilingualism. Desheriev (2019) writes that bilingualism, as it follows from the term itself, implies perfect knowledge of the original, native, and second languages. Many sociolinguists base their definition of bilingualism on the level of proficiency in two languages.

They consider bilingualism as the approximately equal and active knowledge of two or more languages. Genuine bilingualism begins when the degree of mastery of the second language approaches the degree of mastery of the first (Schweizer, 2012).

Avrorin (1975) gives a more rigid formulation: True bilingualism should be considered such, which implies an equal or close to an equal degree of proficiency and use both in speech and in the thought process of two languages that regularly interact with each other in the most important spheres of social activity. All other cases refer to false bilingualism. Khanazarov (1972) disagrees with this: It is not important what language a person thinks in, but it is important whether a person can communicate and exchange thoughts using a second language. Khanazarov believes that we can talk about the presence of bilingualism where people speak a second language to a degree sufficient to communicate and exchange thoughts with native speakers of a second language. We adhere to the point of view of Darbeeva (1984), who believes that the main criterion for determining bilingualism should be the main purpose of the language - communication and mutual understanding of speakers. If speakers can express their thoughts in a second language and perceive what is expressed in it, there is a reason to talk about bilingualism since the second language provides the main function of the language as a means of communication (Khasanov, 1990).

Bilingualism is not only the practice of using two languages but also the practical result and the consequences of the process of bilingualism. The lack of a single definition of bilingualism has affected the differences in the approach to its study. Indeed, from a linguistic point of view, the problem of bilingualism is to describe those several language systems that are in contact with each other, to identify the differences between these systems that make it difficult to master them simultaneously, and to predict in this way the most probable phenomena of interference that arise as a result of the contact of languages and, finally, to indicate in the behavior of bilingual speakers those deviations from the norm of each of the languages that are associated with their bilingualism (Weinreich, 1979).

One can distinguish between natural bilingualism and artificial bilingualism, pure and mixed bilingualism (Shcherba, 2017), contact and non-contact bilingualism (Desheriev, 2019), and individual and mass bilingualism (Bondaletov, 1987). Vereshchagin (2014) distinguishes between subordinative bilingualism and coordinative bilingualism. If a violation of the language system is established in the speech products generated on its basis, i.e., if the bilingual speech products turn out to be incorrect, then this is called subordinative bilingualism. Bilingualism, which ensures the generation of correct speech, i.e., such speech works belonging to a secondary language system, in the composition of which a preserved language system is established, is called coordinative.

One should not lose sight of such bilingualism as active and passive bilingualism. Passive bilingualism refers to a type in which a native speaker is fluent (to a greater or lesser extent) in another language but does not speak it. Sometimes at the same time, he may even perceive a foreign language speech poorly.

The most general definition of multilingualism was proposed by Grosjean (2010), who, as the main characteristic of multilingualism, calls the use of two or more languages by an individual in everyday life. The Big Encyclopedic Dictionary, the Linguistics series, defines multilingualism (polylingualism) as the use of several languages within a certain social community (primarily the state); the use by an individual (a group of people) of several languages, each of which is chosen in accordance with a specific communicative situation (Yartseva, 2000). It is evident that the basis of all existing definitions and the resulting classifications of modern multilingualism is a combination of three main elements: user (speaker), environment (settings), and language (Aronin & Singleton, 2012).

Thus, in accordance with the criterion of language users, it is customary to distinguish between individual and national multilingualism. Identification of two levels of multilingualism: national (in other sources – social and public), characterizing the language situation of an entire nation or society (Cenoz, 2013), and individual, which characterizes both the use of the language and the individual level of proficiency in it, finds confirmation in many survey works on (e.g., Aronin &



Singleton, 2012; Auer & Wei, 2007; Cenoz, 2013; Edwards, 1994). At the same time, if national multilingualism is the object of sociolinguistics, then individual multilingualism acts as an object of psycholinguistic study. Obviously, multilingualism is the characteristic of multinational states on the largest scale. Researchers (e.g., Cenoz, 2013) distinguish the following forms of existence of national (social) multilingualism:

- multilingualism, in which, due to historical processes, two or more languages are approved as state languages;
- multilingualism, in which one state and several ethnic languages coexist; at the same time, either only one language (state) or two languages at once (state and ethnic) can be used in everyday communication;
- emigrants' multilingualism, in which migrants (sometimes bilingual migrants) are forced to learn the language/languages of the new state. This form of public multilingualism is characterized by two opposite situations: adding (additive) and replacing (subtractive) (Cenoz, 2013). In the first case, the second and subsequent languages are acquired against the background of further mastery of the individual's first (titular) language without interfering with its development. In the second case, each subsequent language displaces the previous one. This situation is typical for children from immigrant families who master the official language of the country of residence to the detriment of the development of their mother tongue.

The most commonly accepted definition of a multilingual individual today is the following: a multilingual is any individual who can communicate in more than one language (Wei, 2008). According to Cook (1992), a multilingual cannot be considered a person in which two or three first languages are summed up; each individual is the bearer of his personal multi-competent knowledge, which cannot be measured in monolingual standards. As for the degree of manifestation of multilingualism in a single individual, linguistic science has not yet developed universal standards for its definition. Some criteria proposed by Auer and Wei (2007) include:

1) the level of language proficiency (linguistic proficiency);

2) linguistic competence (linguistic competence) - a system of linguistic knowledge of the speaker about the language/languages;

3) the trajectory of the language development of the individual (developmental trajectories).

The most common form of multilingualism in today's society is trilingualism. In scientific research of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, trilingualism was interpreted as a natural continuation of bilingualism: trilingualism was not considered a special form of multilingualism and was not considered a separate phenomenon with a specific conceptual apparatus and its own methodology. Hoffmann noted that due to the absence of any theoretical justification for trilingualism as a special linguistic configuration, many linguists work within the framework of the concept of bilingualism (Hoffmann, 2001). Traditionally, the trilingual system was considered to be a continuation of the bilingual system (Schonpflug, 2000); therefore, the concept of trilingualism has completely borrowed and still borrows from the theory of bilingualism, its terminology, and basic classifications.

In the Dictionary of Linguistic Terms (Zhrebilo, 2010), trilingualism is defined as proficiency in three languages. European Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, Crystal does not contain a definition of the term trilingualism at all, and the dictionary entry for the term triglossia is limited only to a reference to the term diglossia (Crystal, 2008). Other English dictionaries interpret trilingualism similarly to bilingualism: as proficiency in three languages at the same or nearly the same level (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). Based on the analysis of dictionaries, we can conclude that modern linguistics has not yet formulated clear definitions of the concepts of trilingualism and multilingualism. In other words, the opinion of Hoffman and other authors that the unified concept of trilingualism as a scientific concept remains undeveloped is also relevant to the current state of linguistic science.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that recently in the study of the paradigm bilingualism - trilingualism - multilingualism, it is multilingualism that begins to act as a basic concept, while bilingualism and trilingualism, rather, are considered as their

variants. According to Khasanov (1989), the following types of multilingualism function in Kazakhstan: This is the trilingualism of the Uyghurs (Uyghur-Kazakh-Russian), Dungs (Dungan-Russian-Uyghur), Uzbeks (Uzbek - Tajik-Russian and Uzbek-Tajik-Kazakh), Tajiks (Tajik-Uzbek-Russian and Tajik-Russian-Kazakh), Koreans (Korean -Russian-Kazakh), Germans (German-Russian-Kazakh), Kurds (Kurdish -Kazakh-Russian), Turks (Turkish-Russian-Kazakh), Azerbaijanis (Azerbaijani-Turkish-Russian and Azerbaijani-Turkish-Kazakh), Chechens (Chechen-Ingush-Kazakh and Chechen-Ingush-Russian), Ingush (Ingush-Chechen-Russian and Ingush-Chechen-Kazakh), Kyrgyz (Kyrgyz-Kazakh-Russian) and other peoples.

Quadlingualism is also represented in Kazakhstan. These are four-lingual Dungs (Dungan-Uyghur-Kazakh-Russian), Uighurs (Uyghur-Dungan-Kazakh-Russian), Tajiks (Tajik-Uzbek-Kazakh-Russian), Uzbeks (Uzbek-Tajik-Kazakh-Russian), Chechens (Chechen-Ingush-Kazakh-Russian), Ingush (Ingush-Chechen-Kazakh-Russian) and others. In Kazakhstan (in the Kurdai district), some of the Dungs are five-lingual (there are not so few Dungs who speak Kazakh, Russian, Uyghur, and Kyrgyz languages besides their native ones) (Khasanov, 1989). Trilingualism, with the participation of Kazakh, Russian, and English languages, has recently been gaining strength in Kazakhstan. The creation and formation of trilingualism with the participation of Kazakh, Russian, and English is a new, re-emerging type of multilingualism in Kazakhstan, which is becoming more and more widespread and requires a study of the social need for this type of multilingualism.

Trilingualism is the process of synchronous (parallel or mixed) use of three languages as an integrating means of communication. The main feature of trilingualism with Kazakh, Russian, and English participation is its three-component nature. In the absence of one of the three components, it automatically loses its linguistic status and is perceived as bilingualism. The conducted sociolinguistic research shows that Kazakhstan is characterized by a linguistic situation caused by the constant and active interaction of the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages, i.e., the existence of a situation of trilingualism is obvious. The

distribution of social functions between the Kazakh, Russian and English languages is uneven, but the functioning of trilingualism is evident here.

### **3. The Current Language Situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

The Kazakh language is the first component of Kazakh-Russian-English trilingualism in the Republic of Kazakhstan. As defined by the Constitution and the Law on Languages, the Kazakh language is the state language (Basic legislative acts on languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). The state language should perform the most important functions in the state and public life of the country. First, this is the language of public administration, legislation, legal proceedings, and office work, operating in all public relations spheres throughout the state. The duty of every citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan is to master the state language, which is the most important factor in the consolidation of the people of Kazakhstan. The government, other states, local representatives, and executive bodies are obliged to develop the state language in the Republic of Kazakhstan in every possible way, strengthen its international authority, create all the necessary organizational, material, and technical conditions for the free and free acquisition of the state language by all citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and assist the Kazakh diaspora in the preservation and development of their native language (Basic legislative acts on languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007).

The role of the national language, which contributes to the creation of national unity and its consolidation, is very significant. The main function of the language, in this case, is the function of national unity or unanimity. The determining factor in ethnolinguistic conflicts is the integrating function of the national language. Currently, in Kazakhstan, the language and ethnic community correspond to each other because, according to the 2021 census, 99.6% of Kazakhs recognized their native language as the language of their nation. The Kazakh language environment has been formed, there is a democratically powerful ethnic base, and the Kazakh language functions not only as an ethno-determinant of the nation, performing an integrating function,

but is also a language of a wide category, functioning as a language of interethnic communication.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, there was a need to protect the language of the Kazakh ethnos when the problem of losing the language of a part of the ethnos arose. The loss of the native language by an ethnic community always means the transition of a part or an entire people to some other language. In a situation of mass Kazakh-Russian bilingualism or other national-Russian bilingualism, in a situation where the Russian language was recognized as a second native language, there could be a manifestation of linguistic assimilation and glottophagy.

One of the active components of considered trilingualism is Russian. The right to the functioning and development of the Russian language in Kazakhstan is determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and regulated by the Law on the Functioning of Languages in the Territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In these legislative documents, the Russian language is defined as a language that can officially be used on a par with Kazakh in state organizations and self-government bodies. The law guarantees the right of citizens of the republic to use the Russian language in relations with public authorities, and socially significant services, to meet national and cultural needs. The right to preschool education, general secondary, secondary technical, and higher education in Russian is guaranteed. The principle of real-life bilingualism approved in this way in the socio-political, economic, and cultural spheres of the country as a whole can meet the needs of the general public if it is unconditionally applied.

Currently, Russian is the most widely spoken language in Kazakhstan after Kazakh. The interaction of the Russian language with the Kazakh language is manifested in all sub-spheres of communication: in education, production, office work, science, legislation, and periodicals. The social functions of the Russian language remain voluminous, first of all, preserving the informational value because it is no secret that the comprehension of sciences occurs through the Russian language, which is explained by the lack of educational material in the Kazakh language and the lack

of national teaching staff. The spread of the Russian language among the Kazakhs is facilitated by its functioning as one of the languages of the periodical press. Some newspapers and magazines are dubbed in three languages - Kazakh, Russian, and English.

The Russian language continues to function in the field of science and education as a language of study and a compulsory subject of study. However, the Russian language in the field of education is gradually losing its position. One of the reasons for the narrowing of the scope of the Russian language in education is associated with the ongoing outflow of the Russian-speaking population from the country and the increase in the social and educational functions of the Kazakh language.

In general, there is a noticeable shift in the mastery of the state language among Kazakh Russians. Russian speakers are no longer so sensitive to the requirement to learn the Kazakh language. Many representatives of Russian nationality lived and worked for a long time surrounded by Kazakhs and gradually mastered the Kazakh language, thus becoming bilingual. The motivation for learning the Kazakh language is the following reasons: "Civic duty", and "This language is spoken around me". Knowledge of the language of the indigenous nationality by representatives of non-Kazakh nationality is necessary for everyday communication in labor collectives and in everyday life with representatives of the local population. Thus, in the process of interaction between the components of Kazakh-Russian-English trilingualism, the Russian language plays the role of both a source of borrowings and a catalyst for activating the internal resources of the Kazakh language. It performs the functions of an intermediary language and performs a serious educational function.

Kazakh and foreign companies cooperate with each other. They maintain business and scientific contacts and conduct joint training and internships. And therefore, it is very important to know English, in which representatives of various countries and nationalities can communicate and exchange experience. Sometimes knowledge of English becomes decisive when applying for a job. Given the multinational nature of the

company's workforce, the language of technical and administrative communication is English. For the full performance of job duties, it is recommended to have the appropriate knowledge of the language.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Corpus

Monitoring the language situation in Kazakhstan was done by conducting a population survey by the committee on language policy of the Ministry of Science and higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Respondents were selected according to gender, age, level of education, and place of residence. The total sample was 2,000 people aged 18 and over. 48.6% of men and 51.4% of women took part in it. By age, the respondents were distributed as follows: from 18 to 29 years old - 27.9%; from 30 to 45 years old - 35.9%; from 46 to 60 years old - 28.1%; from 60 years and above - 8.4%. In the context of ethnic groups, 67.7% of the survey participants are Kazakhs; 19.7% - are Russians; 3.5% are Uzbeks, 2.7% are Ukrainians, and 2.2% are representatives of other nationalities. According to the level of education, the population participating in the survey was distributed as follows: secondary education - 36.0%; vocational education - 26.3%; higher education (Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D.) - 37.7%.

### 4.2. Instruments

This study is based on qualitative methods such as interviews and a survey. We chose qualitative rather than quantitative methods in order to focus on the opinions of the residents of the region and present the diversity of points of view about languages and language situations obtained during the census.

### 4.3. Procedure

The survey was conducted in all regions of Kazakhstan (in 14 regions). The first stage of

the work was accompanied by an online survey by specially trained interviewers to conduct a questionnaire. Before the study, the interviewers got familiar with the forms of the survey, the timing of the survey, and the rules for selecting respondents. At the second stage, data processing was performed in the statistical data processing program of the latest version of SPSS, which unified the results obtained for integration into a common database.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. The Level of Proficiency of the Population in the Kazakh, Russian, and English Languages

One of the most important objectives of the study is to study the level of proficiency of the population in the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages and the languages of their ethnic groups, as well as the level of proficiency of the population in three languages (Kazakh, Russian and English).

First of all, in order to determine their mother language, the respondents were asked the question: "What language do you consider native?". About 67.9% of respondents answered - Kazakh, 20.1% - Russian, and 12.1% - other languages. Ethnically, 99.9% of representatives of the Kazakh nationality and 0.4% of other ethnic groups consider the state language to be their native language. The Russian language is considered native by 99.5% of the representatives of the Russian ethnic group, 3.6% of representatives of other ethnic groups, and only 0.1% of representatives of the Kazakh nationality. Other languages are indicated as native by 96.0% of representatives of other ethnic groups, and 0.5% of representatives of the Russian ethnos, and this answer was not recorded among representatives of the Kazakh nationality (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question: "What Language do You Consider Native?", by Ethnic Group, in %*

Ethnos	Kazakh language	Russian language	Other languages
Kazakhs	99.9	0.1	0.0
Russians	0.0	99.5	0.5
Other ethnic groups	0.4	3.6	96.0



**The level of proficiency in the Kazakh language** is an important task of the study. According to the results of the study, the level of proficiency in the state language of the population is 92%.

More than half of the respondents (58.7%) have a good command of the Kazakh language. About 20.5% speak and read Kazakh fluently but write poorly. Only 2.1% do not know the Kazakh language at all.

**The level of Russian language proficiency** among the population is 90.4%. The share of respondents who speak Russian well is 55.5%, which is 3.2% lower than those who speak Kazakh well. On the contrary, the share of those who speak and read Russian fluently, but write poorly, is 22.2%. The proportion of the population that does not speak Russian is 1.0% .

The level of proficiency **in the language of their ethnic group** among the respondents is 97.1%. Of these, the proportion of those with good knowledge is 79.2%. Only 1.6% of the respondents state that they do not know the language of their ethnic group.

The proportion of respondents **who speak English** is 28.5%, of which only 7.9% speak the language well, 40.5% do not speak English at all, and 31.1% understand only some words.

The level of **fluency in three languages** of the population was 27.9%, of which the share of those who speak well is 6.1%. The share of those who answer that they do not know at all is 31.2%, and 40.0% of respondents understand only some words (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Answers of Respondents to the Question: "Please, Evaluate Your Level of Proficiency in Kazakh, Russian, English, and the Language of Your Ethnic Group?", by Level of Proficiency, in %*

Language Proficiency	I don't know at all	I understand certain phrases	I understand well, but I don't speak	I understand and can explain	I speak and read fluently, but I write poorly	Know well	Language Proficiency
Kazakh language	2.5	5.6	7.4	5.4	20.5	58.7	92.0
Russian language	1.0	8.6	5.2	7.3	22.5	55.5	90.4
English language	40.5	31.1	8.7	9.4	2.6	7.9	28.5
The language of your ethnic group	1.6	1.4	2.6	3.6	11.8	79.2	97.1
Proficiency in three languages	32.2	40.0	10.5	8.4	3.0	6.1	27.9

**Table 3**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "Please Rate Your Level of English Proficiency of Your Ethnic Group?", in %*

Ethnos	I don't know at all	I understand certain phrases	I understand well, but I don't speak	I understand and can explain	I speak and read fluently, but I write poorly	Fluent
Kazakhs	41.3	29.8	8.0	10.6	2.3	7.9
Russians	37.9	34.9	12.0	6.1	1.3	7.9
Other	39.6	31.6	6.8	8.0	6.4	7.6

According to the level of English proficiency, the respondents assessed that they have a good

command: 7.9% of the representatives of the Kazakh nationality, 7.9% of the representatives

of the Russian nationality, and 7.6% of the representatives of other ethnic groups. Among other ethnic groups, those who speak fluently, speak but write poorly accounted for 6.4%. Among those who do not speak English at all,

the largest group were Kazakhs (41.3%). The level of ignorance of English is also high among other groups: among Russians, 37.9%, and among representatives of other nationalities, 39.6% (Table 3).

**Table 4**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "Please, Evaluate Your Level of Proficiency in State, Russian, English, and the Language Of Your Ethnic Group?", in Three Languages, in %*

Ethnos	I don't know at all	I understand certain phrases	I understand well, but I don't speak	I understand and can explain	I speak and read fluently, but I write poorly	Fluent
Kazakhs	32.0	38.8	11.1	8.7	3.1	6.3
Russians	31.8	44.5	10.4	5.9	1.3	6.1
Other	33.6	39.2	7.2	10.4	5.2	4.4

The level of proficiency in three languages is reflected as follows: Kazakhs who speak three languages have 6.3% of answers, and Russians - 6.1%. Other ethnic groups were divided into two parts: 33.6% said they did not speak at all, 4.4% answered that they speak fluently, read but write poorly.

To determine the degree of use of languages, the respondents were asked the question: "What language do you use most often in your daily life?" The proportion of the population who answered that they use the Kazakh and Russian languages on equal terms in everyday life, depending on the public sphere of language use, ranged from 31.8% to 41.7%.

## 5.2. The Level of Use of Kazakh, Russian and Other Languages in Everyday Life

**Table 5**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "What Language do You Use Most Often in Your Daily Life?", in %*

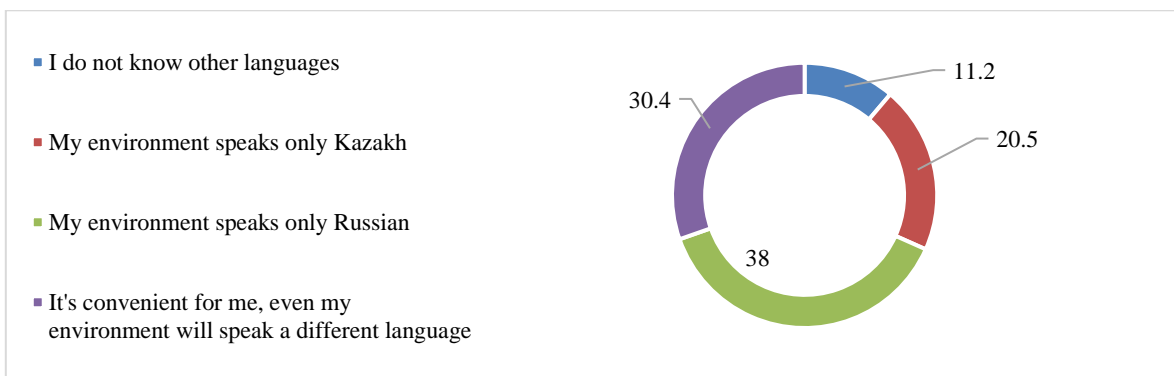
Public Spheres	Only Kazakh	More Kazakh	On equal terms Kazakh and Russian	More Russian	Only Russian	Other languages
1. In shopping centers, shops, and markets	8.8	13.2	36.2	26.0	15.9	-
2. In public transport	9.3	11.9	39.9	20.8	18.3	-
3. In intercity transport (buses, trains, and planes)	7.6	9.3	39.8	21.0	21.3	1.1
4. In educational institutions	9.1	29.3	31.8	14.2	15.4	0.3
5. In healthcare facilities	10.8	16.9	38.0	15.6	18.8	-
6. In akimats and government bodies	13.1	16.5	36.6	15.2	18.8	-
7. In banks	9.6	15.5	37.3	17.8	19.8	0.1
8. In public service centers	12.3	16.9	35.0	17.3	18.6	-
9. In cinemas, theaters, museums, and cultural institutions	6.4	12.7	38.3	20.3	22.4	-
10. In the police	9.5	16.5	39.7	15.8	18.6	-
11. In KSK (cooperatives of apartment owners)	7.6	12.7	41.7	17.1	21.0	0.1
12. In cafes, restaurants, and other food outlets	6.2	11.3	37.9	20.6	24.2	-
13. At work	8.6	14.4	41.0	16.1	19.7	0.3

A high proportion of the use of only the Kazakh language in akimats and government bodies was shown by 13.1%, in public service centers 12.3%, and in healthcare institutions 10.8%.

In most cases, respondents use the Kazakh language in educational institutions (29.3%), Kazakh and Russian are equally used in KSK (cooperatives of apartment owners) 41.7%, at work 41.0%, and in public transport 39.9%.

Most often, the Russian language is used by 26.0% in shopping centers, shops, and on the market, and 21.0% in international transport (buses, trains, and planes).

Respondents more often use only Russian in cafes, restaurants, and other public catering establishments (24.2%), cinemas, theaters, museums, and cultural institutions (22.4%).



**Figure 1**

Answers of Respondents to the Question: “Tell the Main Reason for Using Kazakh/Russian/other languages in Everyday Life?”, in %

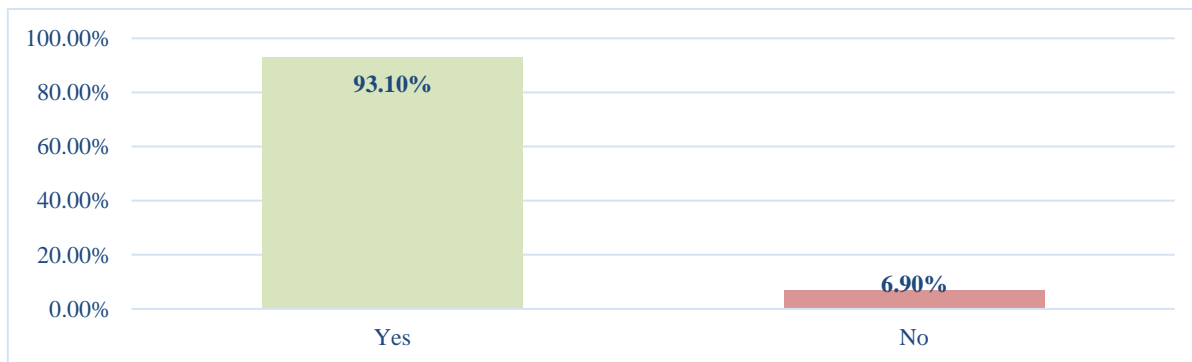
The main reasons for the use of a particular language were as follows: 38.0% note that their environment speaks only Russian; 30.4% say that it is convenient for them, even if the environment speaks another language; 20.5% claim that their environment speaks only Kazakh; 11.2% of respondents said they did not know other languages. In general, respondents said that those around them speak Russian more.

In the context of ethnic groups, representatives of the Kazakh nationality (43.2%) believe that their environment speaks only Russian. Representatives of the Russian ethnic group

(35.4%) and other ethnic groups (27.6%) more often chose the answer, “It’s convenient for me, even if my environment speaks another language”.

**5.3. Development of the Kazakh Language on the Internet**

The digital information technologies in the world, in particular the Internet, have a huge impact on the development of society today. The share of the population using the Internet in Kazakhstan makes up 93.1%. This figure means that the population daily receives information from the Internet.

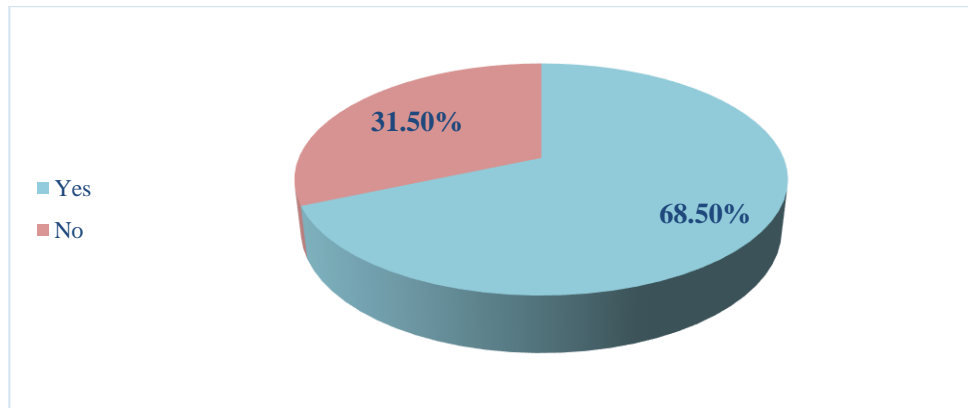


**Figure 2**

Respondents’ Answers to the Question: “Do You Use the Internet?”, in %

It is important to know in what language the information will be received, based on the high level of Internet usage by the population, while respondents using the World Wide Web were

asked how much Kazakh is in it. Almost 68.5% of respondents believe that the Kazakh language is sufficiently represented on the Internet (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "In Your Opinion, is the Kazakh Language Sufficiently Represented on the Internet?", in %*

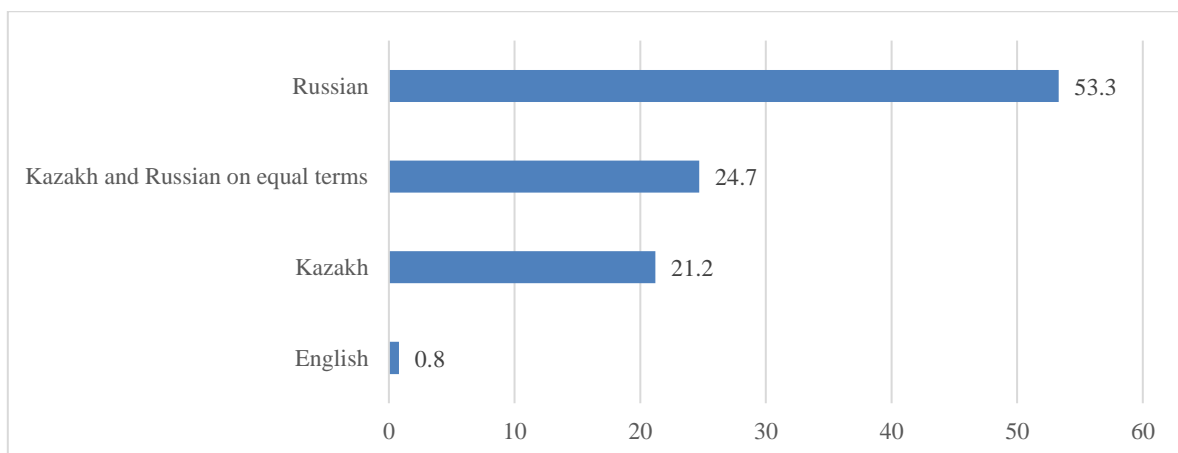
**Table 6**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "Please Evaluate the Level of Information on the Internet in the Kazakh Language, According to the Criteria?", in %*

Answer options	1	2	3	4	5	Difficult to rate	Average level
Completeness	8.9	11.1	28.4	23.7	13.6	14.4	3.62
Relevance	6.5	11.7	24.4	28.9	15.9	12.7	3.74
Availability	7.0	10.6	28.2	23.6	16.8	13.8	3.74
Total:							3.7

The assessment by the population of the level of information provided in the Kazakh language on the Internet is at the average level of "3.7". "Completeness" of information in the

Kazakh language was rated by 28.4% of respondents at "3" (on average), "relevance" by 28.9% - at "4" (above average), "accessibility" by 24.2% - at "3" (average).



**Figure 4**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "What Language do You Use to Get Information on Internet Resources?", in %*



The population receives information from the Internet primarily in Russian (53.3%), then in Kazakh and Russian (24.7%). 21.2% of the

population receive information in the Kazakh language, and only 0.8% in English.

**Table 7**

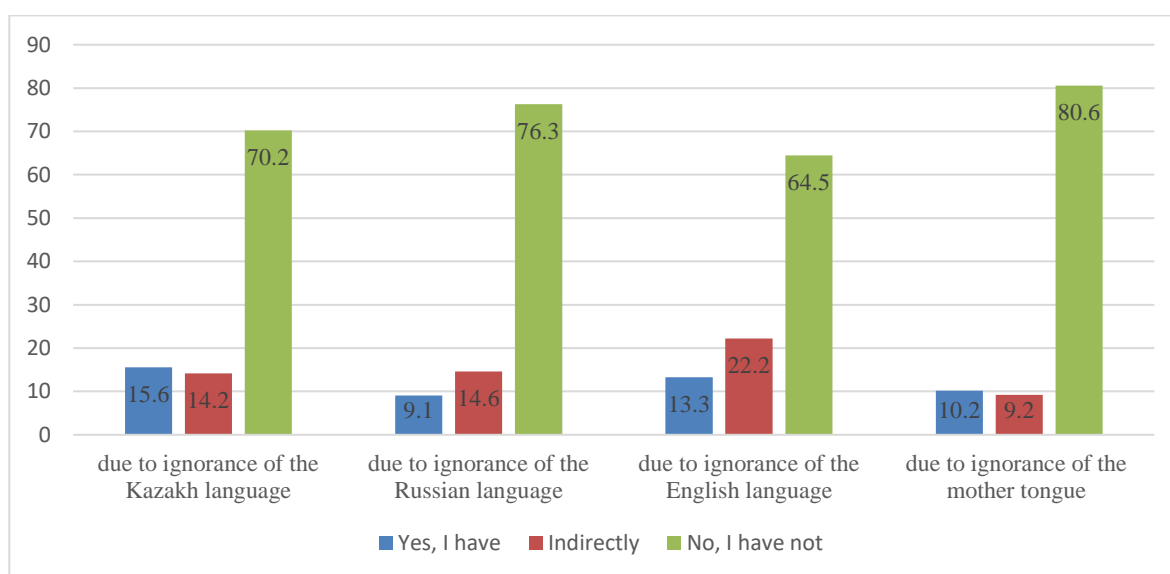
*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "How Much do You Use the State Language in Social Networks and Messengers?"; in %*

Answer options	Only in Kazakh	More in Kazakh	Equally in Kazakh and Russian	More in Russian	Only in Russian	In another language
Usage in Messengers, Telegram, You Tube, etc.	2.6	14.3	27.4	25.1	30.3	0.3
Social media usage: Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and etc.	1.7	16.3	26.6	24.4	30.6	0.3

The use of the Russian language prevails in social networks and instant messengers. In messengers, 30.3% of respondents use only Russian, and 25.1% use mostly Russian. In social networks, Russian is used exclusively by 30.6% of respondents, and 24.4% use mainly Russian.

The share of the use of the Kazakh language in messengers is 16.9% (in the sum of the answer options "only in the Kazakh language" 2.6%, "more in the Kazakh language" 14.3%). The share of those who use only the Kazakh language and mainly the Kazakh language in social networks is 18.0%. The proportion of the population that equally uses Kazakh and Russian languages in instant messengers (27.4%) and social networks (26.6%) was also revealed.

Since the main means of communication in society is language, it is important to know the difficulties associated with not knowing the language in everyday life, in communicating with people, and in the workplace. The study revealed the proportion of the population that did not encounter various difficulties due to lack of knowledge of the language in everyday life, in communication, and at work: due to ignorance of the Kazakh language 70.2%, due to ignorance of the Russian language 76.3%, due to ignorance of the English language 64.5%, and due to ignorance of the native language 80.6%. Due to ignorance of the Kazakh language 15.6%, Russian 9.1%, English 13.3%, and native language 10.2% faced difficulties.



**Figure 5**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "Have You Encountered Problems in Everyday Life, in Communication, at Work Because of Not Knowing the Language?"; in %*

Ethnically, more representatives of the Russian ethnos faced difficulties because of not knowing Kazakh (23.9%) and English (13.7%) languages. As for representatives of

other ethnic groups, they encountered problems because of not knowing Russian (10.4%) and their native language (13.2%).

**Table 8**

*Respondents' Answers to the Question: "Have You Encountered Problems in Everyday Life, in Communication, at Work Because of Not Knowing the Language?", in %*

Variants	Yes, I have	Indirectly	No, I have not
<b><i>Due to ignorance of the Kazakh language</i></b>			
Kazakhs	11.9	12.1	76.1
Russians	<b>23.9</b>	18.3	57.8
Other ethnic groups	23.2	19.2	57.6
<b><i>Due to ignorance of the Russian language</i></b>			
Kazakhs	8.6	14.9	76.5
Russians	9.9	11.5	78.6
Other ethnic groups	<b>10.4</b>	18.4	71.2
<b><i>Due to not knowing English</i></b>			
Kazakhs	13.6	23.9	62.5
Russians	<b>13.7</b>	18.6	67.7
Other ethnic groups	11.2	18.4	70.4
<b><i>Due to ignorance of the mother tongue</i></b>			
Kazakhs	9.9	10.2	79.9
Russians	9.2	6.9	84.0
Other ethnic groups	<b>13.2</b>	6.8	80.0

## 6. Concluding Remarks

The study of the language situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan shows that trilingualism consisting of three components - Kazakh + Russian + English - is the most theoretically and practically acceptable functional model.

The creation and formation of trilingualism with the participation of Kazakh, Russian, and English is a new, re-emerging type of multilingualism in Kazakhstan, which is becoming more and more widespread and requires a study of the social need for this type of multilingualism. Trilingualism is a process of synchronous (parallel or mixed) use of three languages in various fields as an integrating means of communication. The use of Kazakh, Russian, and English languages by Kazakhs in various spheres of life is called Kazakh-Russian-English trilingualism. Yet, the distribution of public functions between the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages in the areas of communication is carried out unevenly.

The study results showed that the proficiency levels in Kazakh, Russian, English, and the ethnic languages of the participants are increasing. However, there are still Kazakhs and other ethnic groups who consider Russian

as their native language and who often use Russian in their family settings. Therefore, it is necessary to foster a culture of reading, writing, and speaking in the state language, as well as to create favorable conditions for each nation in the country to master their ethnic language.

It turned out that representatives of the Kazakh nationality are fluent in the state language, with the exception of Russian-speaking Kazakhs, but they show interest and actively speak their native languages. According to a number of respondents, after entering the university and going to work, they began to actively use the state language, in addition to Russian. This is due to the active use by the Kazakhs of the state language in Russian groups and thereby stimulating other ethnic groups and Russified Kazakhs to practice the Kazakh language actively.

Answering the question about the development of the state language on the Internet, the respondents emphasized the quality, relevance, and availability of content in the Kazakh language at a satisfactory level. Clarity, timeliness, and frequent updating of content in the Kazakh language can be called satisfactory. The level of Internet use by the population has increased, but the introduction of the state

language is at a satisfactory level. Therefore, in order to maximize the use of the state language on the Internet, it is necessary to develop content more often on topics that are in demand in modern text, especially among young people.

It was revealed that English is an important language, which is the language of access to the world's information. It is the language of international communication and is important for the respondents. Trilingualism, realizing its importance, is well appreciated; in general, conditions have been created in the country for the uniform study of the state, Russian, and English languages.

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