

DOI: 10.31648/PW.7665

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THE STATUS OF KAZAKH IN KAZAKHSTAN IN URBAN AREAS: THE CASE OF SHYMKENT

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the status of Kazakh in Shymkent in recent years. Shymkent is the third-largest city in Kazakhstan, with a population of over one million. Like in all large cities in this country, most of the Kazakh population in Shymkent is Kazakh-Russian bilingual, while the Russians are monolingual Russian speakers. The strength of Kazakh in Shymkent depends on many factors, such as the type of district, sociolinguistic features, and it is different in the spoken and the written form. Although Kazakh in Shymkent is the object of frequent comments in Kazakhstan, it has not yet been studied. The research material is based on fieldwork, analysis of the local media and websites. It may be argued that despite the local conditions and assets, the position of Kazakhs in public domains depends on the state's language policy and the degree of integration with Russia.

KEYWORDS: Kazakh, status, Kazakhstan, urban areas, Shymkent

1. Kazakh in Shymkent in relation to Kazakhstan in general

1.1. Situation in Kazakhstan

According to the Kazakh Constitution, Kazakh is the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan: 'The state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan shall be the Kazak language' (Article 2, 1). However, point 2 of this article says: 'In state institutions and local self-administrative bodies, the Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazak language'.¹ This regulation grants very large prerogatives to the Russian language. In 1997, two years after the approval of the constitution, the Parliament passed the law on languages that regulates the use of Kazakh and Russian, as well as the use of other minority languages in a detailed way (Qazaqstan Respublikasındaǵı 1998).² Therefore, it is clear that

¹ Quoted from the English version of the website of the Kazakh Parliament (<http://www.parlam.kz/en/constitution>), for the Kazakh and Russian versions, see Qazaqstan Respublikasınıń konstitutsiyası (1998). Note the form 'Kazak', but 'Kazakhstan,' not 'Kazakstan.'

² Since the question of the final version of the new Kazakh alphabet based on Latin script has not been settled, Kazakh names, words and examples in the present article are provided in a Turkological

language policy is an important component of the state policy in Kazakhstan. An assessment of these legal acts and language policy in Kazakhstan falls beyond the scope of this paper. However, language policy in Kazakhstan must be evaluated from two perspectives. Firstly, one has to take into consideration the Russian and the Soviet past with its legal acts and practice (Dave 2007, 96; Kulzhanova 2012, 4-9) and, secondly, the achievements and failures of language policy in Kazakhstan in the 30 years of independence declared on 16 December 1991 (Fierman 2005b, 410-423; Dave 2007, 100-102; Kulzhanova 2012, 13-13). In Jankowski's (2012, 29) view, the language policy in Kazakhstan in the twenty years of independence (1991-2011) was inconsistent and ineffective. Specifically, it is ineffective for the state language. It may be argued that the situation of Kazakh has changed negatively since the proclamation of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, even if the EAEU can be positively evaluated in other domains of life. This union with the member states of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation enhances the role of Russian as the most important language. Firstly, the union needs a common language, and, in this case, the common language is naturally Russian. Secondly, an outcome of this union is a great rise of Kazakh-Russian companies and corporations with Russian as the common language. Thirdly, this union opens the way to an influx of Russian goods, wares and technology with services in Russian. Fourthly, it favours the activities of many Russian companies in Kazakhstan which promote Russian. In general, Russia's leading role in the EAEU and its absolute majority of votes is a well-known fact (Kansikas 2015, 112). Kazakh is too weak to compete with Russian and does not have real support from the state. Moreover, the integration with Russia encourages young Kazakhs to study at Russian universities, which creates a brain drain. As a result, many skilled Kazakhs start their professional careers in Russia, and the possibility of studying at Russian universities fosters learning Russian in Kazakhstan.

In the opinion of this author, as long as the constitution grants the Russian language such great prerogatives and as long as the authorities practise the policy of preferring Russian in public life, science, education, interethnic relations as well as in diplomacy and international relations, Kazakh will never reach the status of a real state language.

transcription based on the Turkish alphabet. For the last version of the Kazakh alphabet approved by the Kazakh prime minister, announced on 21 January 2021, see Latın grafikasındaǵı (2021). The shift to the new alphabet was first scheduled to be completed by 2025, but the new decree stipulated the period of the alphabet change for the years 2023-2031. Latin script is gradually introduced to many names, but some are written according to the previous standard, decreed by the former President of Kazakhstan in a mixed standard, e.g. the titles of the two biggest newspapers in the province appear as *Óntústik Qazaqstan* and *Shymkent kelbeti*, while in the former standard they should be *Óntústik Qazaqstan* and *Shymkent kelbeti* and in the new one *Óñtústik Qazaqstan* and *Şymkent kelbeti*.

The position of Kazakh in Kazakhstan is diversified. The strongest position of the state language is in the southern provinces (South Kazakhstan,³ Jambıl and Qızılorda), in Mañğıstaw and Atraw provinces in the west and in East Kazakhstan province. Kazakh is the weakest in the northern provinces bordering the Russian Federation, which have high proportions of Russian-speaking populations (North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and Qostanay provinces). The titular language is also weak in great cities, including Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) and Almaty. According to some authors (e.g. Äbdäkimulı 2017, 5), in the southern regions of Kazakhstan, the local Kazakhs, through marriages and close relations with the local Uzbeks, shifted to Uzbek and, in fact, became Uzbeks. This question requires further study, and Äbdäkimulı's paper must be read with reservation since it is difficult to agree with some historical arguments pronounced in it.

Russian is still the *de facto* inter ethnic language in Kazakhstan, although the constitution does not grant such a status to it. This is a continuation of the status it enjoyed in the Soviet Union and the status granted to Russian by the 1989 Language Law (Dave 2007, 101). On the other hand, the 1989 Language Law granted the exclusive status of the state language to Kazakh. Since 1991, the number of monolingual Russian-speaking Kazakhs has been decreasing, while the number of other monolingual Russian-speaking nationals has remained unchanged, although the latter often declare fluency in Kazakh, since Kazakh is a compulsory subject even in schools with Russian-language education. The exception is the case of some Turkic-speaking nationalities (basically Uzbeks and Uighurs) who are mostly trilingual, and speak their own ethnic language as well as Kazakh and Russian.

Conversation and proceeding written documents between two partners, one of whom is Russian, or Russian-speaking non-Kazakh in Kazakhstan, is performed exclusively in Russian. As a rule, the latter are not expected to speak Kazakh in conversation with the Kazakhs. All this confirms what was established a long time ago, i.e. that the official language in Kazakhstan is *de facto* Russian (Schlyter 2003, 170; Fierman 2005a, 120; Jankowski 2012, 30). Moreover, many Kazakhs regard Russian as a more prestigious language and an international language known globally. Since the Kazakh authorities' current policy tends to integrate with Russia, the Kazakhs consider Russian as an important language and take the opportunity to master it through contact with the Russians. This situation is not favourable to the development of Kazakh. As a whole, we can say that the general appearance of the

³ After many years since its establishment in the structure of the Soviet Union, the South Kazakhstan province was renamed Türkistan province and its seat was moved from Shymkent to Türkistan City on 19 June 2018. At the same time, Shymkent became a city independent of the province administration and directly linked to the central state administration, now often called a metropolis. However, many people still call the province by its old name, especially if they look at it from the geographic perspective.

Kazakh cities is Russian. Since 55% of the Kazakhstani population is urban, the public language of more than half of the population is Russian.

Colloquial Kazakh, especially as spoken by the people educated in Russian-Kazakh bilingual programmes and the people who are in intensive contact with Russian, is full of code-mixing and code-switching. There is some literature on these phenomena about the speech of the Kazakhs (e.g. Krippes 1994; Auer and Muhamedowa 2005; Muhamedowa 2006; Jankowski 2012, 33-34), as well as using Russian discourse markers (Jankowski 2012, 35) and copying the structures of Russian grammar (Jankowski 2012, 35-39). These studies show how spoken Kazakh is mixed with Russian. Moreover, Muhamedowa (2016) included all of these cases in her grammar, e.g. the use of Russian adjectives with Russian suffixes, e.g. *važnyj*⁴ ‘important’ (p. 13), adverbials, e.g. *v obšem* ‘generally’ (p. 15), interjections, e.g. *davaj* ‘Come on’ (p. 27), mixing codes, e.g. *ja govorju, ey qazaqtar* ‘I say, hey, Kazakhs’ (p. 30), finite clauses of the Russian type with Russian conjunctions, e.g. *čto* (p. 31).

1.2. Situation in Shymkent

Shymkent, often referred to by its Uzbek and Russian name as Chimkent, with a population of 711,873 in 2015, over one million at the end of 2017 and 1,121,809 as of 1.10.2019, see Fig. 1, is the third-largest city in Kazakhstan after Almaty and Nur-Sultan. Until 19 June 2018, it was the capital city of the South Kazakhstan Province, the most populous province of Kazakhstan with a population of 2,789 million in 2015 (Qazaqstan Respublikası xalqınıñ 2020).

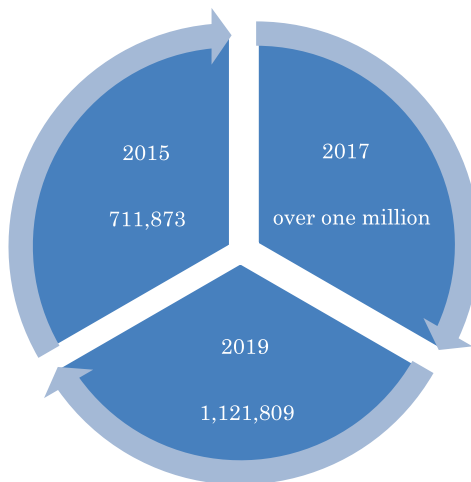


Figure 1. Population of Shymkent

⁴ Muhamedowa’s writing of Russian words has been retained.

The province administration, with its seat in Shymkent was one of the first to declare the switch of all administration procedures from Russian to Kazakh (Jankowski 2012, 58) besides Qızılorda, Atırav, Jambıl and Mañğıstaw provinces. Although the Kazakhs make up the majority of the inhabitants of Shymkent, the population of the city, as in the whole of Kazakhstan, is multiethnic. In 2018, the three major ethnicities were the Kazakhs with 65.95%, the Uzbeks with 18.18% and the Russians with 9.73%. The percentage of the Kazakhs and the Uzbeks is increasing, whereas that of the Russians is decreasing, see Fig. 2.⁵

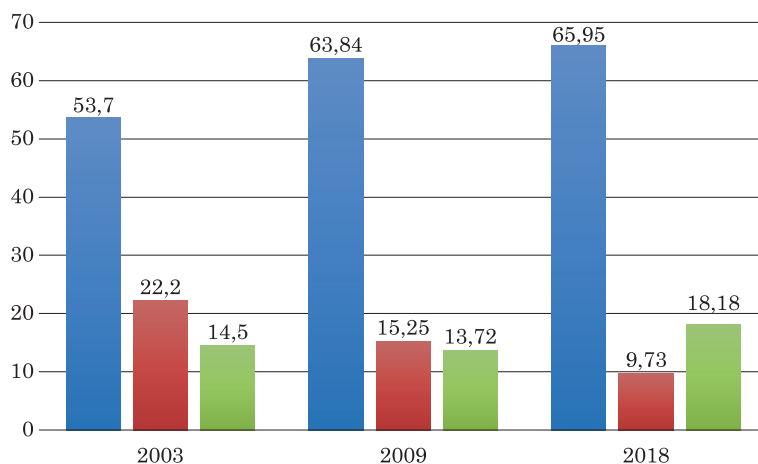


Figure 2. Ethnic Population of Shymkent in percentage (blue – Kazakhs, claret – Russians, green – Uzbeks)

Shymkent and the former South Kazakhstan province are perceived as a city and a region where Islam and the traditional Central Asian culture, custom law and gender separation are strictly observed. Some Kazakhs from central and northern regions of Kazakhstan, especially women who consider themselves progressive and Russian-speaking Kazakhs, distance themselves from Shymkent and the south. Shymkent and the whole region is also said to be an area where the Kazakh language has a high status and is commonly used in contrast to some other regions. However, the current study shows that it is only partially true. This is because a general Kazakhstanian rule is valid for both Shymkent and the whole province: Kazakh is spoken only between ethnic Kazakhs. When a group of Kazakhs is joined by a Russian or a Russian-speaking person, including people of Asian descent, e.g. Kazakhstanian Koreans, the whole group immediately shifts to Russian. As said above, the situation is different with other Turkic-speaking minorities, basically the Uzbeks. The Uzbeks often speak a mixed Uzbek-Kazakh language in conversation with the Kazakhs. They typically pronounce *y*-, *ş*, *ç* as opposed to Kazakh *j*-, *s*,

⁵ Compiled on the basis of Khasanuly (2007, 192-193) and the later data.

ş, e.g. *yüz* ‘hundred’ (Kazakh *jüz*), *yaxşı* ‘good’ (Kazakh *jaqsı*), *Çimkent* (Kazakh *Şimkent*). According to the general Kazakhstani custom, they also speak Russian to Russians.

In formal situations, institutions and public places, the use of Russian is still frequent among the Kazakhs. When a client addresses a public officer in Kazakh, he is normally served in this language, but depending on the competence of the officer, their conversation may be full of Russian special terms and code-switching.

The use of Kazakh in writing is even more limited. Many forms and official documents are quasi-bilingual. In fact, they are filled in and issued in Russian and the presence of Kazakh is limited to a few pre-printed Kazakh words and formulae. The situation in Türkistan province is more favourable to the state language because, in contrast to the Central and North Kazakhstan, the language of communication of the Kazakh population is normally Kazakh.

Uzbekistan, with its strong position of the state language just across the border and proximity to Tashkent (120 km from Shymkent), is an important factor but rather in the southern districts bordering Uzbekistan, e.g. Sariağaç or Şardara, than in the city. Typical Uzbek words, e.g. *jüdü* ‘many; much’ or *közäyne* ‘glasses’ are provincial and not normally heard in Shymkent, unless used by the ethnic Uzbeks. A Turkic word which should be attributed to Uzbek commonly used in Shymkent, is *ege* ‘owner’, the Standard Kazakh word is *iye*, see Syzdykova and Khusain (2001, 227) who include this word in their dictionary with reference to *iye* and qualify it as dialectal (for more on the Shymkent dialect see Nurmağambetov 1986, 95-96). Therefore, the view that Kazakh, as spoken in Shymkent and the province, is affected by Uzbek is exaggerated.

In addition to the strong position of Kazakh among the Kazakhs in Shymkent and in the whole province, there is another factor making this region important for the rest of Kazakhstan. This is the fact that people from this overpopulated region migrate to other cities seeking better businesses and job opportunities, and popularise their language attitudes elsewhere (e.g. Äbdiraşılı 2017, 4).

2. Linguistic topography of Shymkent

Shymkent is divided into four large districts (*awdan*): Abay, Äl-Farabiy, Qarataw and Eñbekşi. Each of these districts is divided into so-called micro-districts (*şağın awdan* or *möltek awdan*, sometimes written jointly as *şağınawdan* or *möltekawdan*). There are both similarities and differences between these districts. From the point of view of the language, the most important is the ethnic composition of a micro-district. Since the city centre is a meeting place for all the people and is mixed, Kazakh is used as often as Russian. However, as a written language, Kazakh is seen less frequently than Russian. In many new commercial and public

places, inscriptions in English also appear quite commonly. It happens that a sign or a banner announces something in Russian and English, but not in Kazakh.

The largest proportion of Russian-speaking people inhabit the Soviet-style quarters of apartment blocks, and in those places Russian is used as often as Kazakh. The city centre also has a great proportion of Russian dwellers. However, in new micro-districts, both apartment blocks, detached houses and semi-detached houses, the dwellers are predominantly Kazakh and the language spoken there is also almost exclusively Kazakh. This is not valid for the written language. The situation is identical in the rural-like remote districts with the evident predominance of Kazakh also as a written language in ads, signs, inscriptions and notices.

After the declaration of the independence of Kazakhstan, many street names were converted to Kazakh. Some street names were translated into Kazakh, e.g. *ul. Zvezdnaya* ‘Star Street’ became *Juldız köşesi*, *ul. Bratskaya* ‘Brethren Street’ became *Bawırlastar köşesi*. Almost all main streets in the city centre which bore names related to Soviet ideology were replaced with Kazakh names, e.g. *pr. Kommunisticheskij* ‘Communist Boulevard’ was converted to *Täwke Khan dañğılı* ‘Täwke Khan Boulevard’, *pr. Lenina* ‘Lenin Boulevard’ to *Respublika dañğılı* ‘Republic Boulevard’. Most of the major transit and main roads outside the city centre were also Kazakhised, e.g. *ul. Libknekhta* ‘Liebknecht Street’ was renamed *Orınbay aqın köşesi* ‘Poet Orynbay Street’. The adoption of these new names was a long process but it was generally successful and the town dwellers now use most of them. It is probably only *Duwlatty köşesi* that has not been commonly accepted, and many people still call it by its old name *Karl Marx*. The old Russian names are also used by the Russians, especially elderly people. Moreover, some streets, even those which have never had Russian names, are put to Russian forms, even in the speech of the Kazakhs, e.g. *Sayram* Street is sometimes called *Sayramskaya*.

Many characteristic points of the city topography are still referred to in Russian, e.g. *Sever* ‘North’, *Vostok* ‘East’ or *Ozero* ‘Lake’. This is also the case with many public places such as *bol'nitsa* ‘hospital’ and *shkola* ‘school’.

This is noticeable on the buses and minibuses of public transportation. The leading carriers, such as the Green Bus Company, mostly employ Kazakh conductors who announce the stops in Kazakh, but their announcements are full of common Russian names as those mentioned above. When they ask the passengers collectively, they say *Bar ma?*, which is an abbreviation for *Tüsetin bar ma?* ‘Is there anybody getting out?’, however, when they serve an individual passenger and he is Russian, they do it in Russian.

In conclusion, we can say that the general landscape of Shymkent, its infrastructure and basic orientation points is Russian with some Kazakh components. Discourse strategies with code-switching and code-mixing, as discussed above in the overall Kazakhstani practice, are also characteristic of Kazakh spoken in Shymkent.

2.1. City centre

The street signs seen in the main streets are mostly trilingual, i.e. a Kazakh name, e.g. *Momişulı* and the word ‘street’ in Kazakh, Russian and English, i.e. *ulitsa – köşesi – street*. This is in accordance with the proclamation of trilingual education and the language policy in Kazakhstan, which has been declared but is far from any realistic measures.⁶

If we compare the present-day city centre with how it looked a few years ago, the situation of the Kazakh language became unfavourable. While around ten years ago the commerce, business and services made a kind of facade of their two-language activities, now the presence of Kazakh is minimal, and an increasing number of shopping centres, businesses and services do not use Kazakh at all in the written form.

Wherever there is any written bilingual notice, table, chart, banner, or billboard, Russian is the basic language, better highlighted and exposed. Jankowski (2012, 35) has demonstrated methods of emphasising Russian, such as applying a larger font, a more visible colour, or placing the Russian text in a more visible part of a billboard.

Another facade method of advertising a service or product in Russian and Kazakh is applying a general notice or information in both languages, but with all additional details which are more important than the general information in Russian. For instance, many jewellers apply the following sign: *Zerger – yuvelir. Izgotovleniye i remont yuvelirnykh izdeliy* ‘Jeweller. Making and repairing jewellery’. If we skip the word *zerger*, we get what we find in many towns in Russia.

2.2. Three selected micro-districts, No 11, Nursät and Qaytpas 1

As noted above, the micro-districts differ from one another, but these three selected micro-districts seem to be representative of the basic types.

2.2.1. Micro-district No 11

Micro-district 11 is situated in the district *Eñbekşi awdanı*, which bears a Soviet-style name, copied from Rus. *Trudovoy rayon* ‘District of the Workmen’. It is one of the seven micro-districts numbered from 11 to 18, each similar to another. It covers a large area of apartment blocks built in the 1960s-1970s with a population of more than 10,000 people. This quarter has many advantages such as good infrastructure,

⁶ It is debatable if trilingual education hinders first-language competence of elementary school children. In some cases, children instructed in the so-called double-immersion programmes in the two second languages experienced no setbacks in the first-language proficiency, as proven by Genesee and Lambert (1983, 113), but their findings should not be generalized, since they involved intellectually and socioeconomically advanced children and children from unchallenged majority language backgrounds.

commercial facilities, services, good public transportation and proximity to the city centre. Another important advantage are large trees around all blocks that give shadow on hot summer days and a kind of relaxation. This micro-district has a high proportion of Russian-speaking dwellers. Since many children that play outside are Russian, the Russian language is used as often as Kazakh. If a child is Russian in a group of Kazakh children, all speak Russian. In mixed groups of this type, the Kazakh children also talk to other Kazakhs in Russian. Russian may also be spoken in groups in which there are no Russians.

Almost all labels, signs, announcements and instructions are written only in Russian. From this point of view, everything is like in the city centre.

2.2.2. Micro-district Nursät

Nursät (in Rus. Nursat, from which it is often Romanised as Nursat) is a large micro-district in the northern part of the city, in the Qarataw district. No data on the population of this micro-district is available. It has an area of apartment blocks and an area of attached houses. Most of the population are Kazakhs, but there are also some other Turkic-speaking families and families from the Middle East. The Russians are nearly absent. The language heard almost everywhere is Kazakh, including children on the playgrounds. The street name signs are monolingual Kazakh or trilingual. Since this district is relatively new, there are no street names rooted in the Soviet times. Some are Kazakh, e.g. *Astana dañğılı* ‘Astana Boulevard’, some international, e.g. *İzmir köşesi* ‘Izmir Street’, *Grosetto köşesi* ‘Grosetto Street’.

However, on written inscriptions, ads, labels, billboards and wall charts, Kazakh, although present, e.g. *satuwşy qız qajet* ‘seller girl needed’, does not surpass Russian, e.g. *stoyanka dlya kliyentov* ‘parking place for the clients’, *sdam v arendu* ‘to let’, *dom prodavetsya* ‘house for sale’, *prodavetsya uchastok* ‘plot for sale’. A public announcement states *Mesto sbora pri zemletryasenii* ‘Assembling place in case of an earthquake’, only in Russian.

2.2.3. Micro-district Qaytpas 1

Qaytpas 1 (in short, Qaytpas, but note that there is also Qaytpas 2) is a micro-district of the Qarataw district in the northern part of Shymkent on the outskirts of the city, not far away from Nursät. It is composed of detached houses of the middle and lower social classes. The population is overwhelmingly Kazakh and the spoken language is Kazakh, though no official data is available.

Many streets have genuine Kazakh names, such as *Bäyterek*, *Sarıarqa* or *Şımrı*. One of the main streets of the micro-district is *Altınсарin köşesi* ‘Altynsarin Street’. The street signs are monolingual Kazakh. The signs of many shops are also monolingual Kazakh, though bilingual shop signs are also found. Not only the names of shops, but labels with additional information, e.g. *jumis waqıtı* ‘open

hours', *aşıq* 'open' are often monolingual Kazakh. Frequently seen signs on the houses such as 'for sale' are either Russian, e.g. *dom prodayetsya*, or Kazakh, *üy satıladı*. This is important to stress since, in other districts, ads of this type are exclusively in Russian.

3. Access to Kazakhs books and the local media

The reading rate among Kazakhs was always low in the country, and the figures are constantly decreasing. The figures provided by the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan demonstrate that at least 50% of the adult population of Kazakhstan do not read at all and the number of active readers is 17%, though this percentage is based on the number of book buyers (Proyekt Programma 2010). It must be added that this number encompasses all readers, and the number of readers of Kazakh books is much lower. Many Kazakhs say that they do not understand literary Kazakh. Maxanov (2017, 1) stresses that it is difficult to expect university students to read Kazakh since university teachers and even specialists in language and literature do not read it. The question of understanding the written language has two aspects. On the one hand, Kazakh belletristic works are written with a refined language, very rich in synonyms and rare words that an average person cannot understand. On the other hand, many written instructions, official documents and legal acts are translated from Russian in a way that Kazakh grammatical and semantic constructions are violated. Therefore, people prefer reading original Russian versions to awkward Kazakh translations. This is especially true of textbooks for schools that do not encourage schoolchildren to read. Critics say that not only the children but also the teachers do not understand such textbooks (Köbeyeveva 2017).

3.1. Kazakh books and book sales

The situation in the Kazakh book market in Kazakhstan is very difficult. The National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan admits that the share of the Kazakh publishers in the book market in Kazakhstan amounts to 10%-35%, and the remaining are the publications from the Russian Federation (Proyekt Programma 2010). There are bookstores which sell only Russian books, while there are no bookstores which sell only Kazakh books (Jankowski 2012, 31). In general, there are few bookstores, and their number is decreasing. Online bookselling is also limited but it is increasing. Although some online sellers display hundreds or thousands of books for sale, most of them are textbooks for schools. A positive aspect of the lack of book market for the reader is the fact that almost all new books are available online in the open-access system.

The situation in the book market as described above is also true of Shymkent. The city with a population of over a million has only one bookstore that sells

exclusively Kazakh books, the bookstore Qazına located at Qonayev Boulevard 5, which also sells books online.⁷ Many bookstores that existed before have been closed down. They could not survive in the free market conditions. There are bookstores at some shopping centres, but their book supply is very poor and mostly Russian.

Fortunately, books, including those published in Kazakh, principally for children, may be purchased at other places, e.g. at Ernur Press newsagents. Another distinguishing feature of Shymkent in relation to the rest of the country is that there are a few periodicals which offer popular stories that compensate the reader for the lack of short stories and novels on the market. The stories published in these periodicals are written in simple Kazakh and focus on popular topics such as love, crime, illness, treachery, bigamy, addiction, unwanted pregnancy, etc.

3.2. Kazakh press

The great disproportion of the Kazakh and Russian press was well-known before the economic integration with the Russian Federation, and it has deteriorated since then. According to Şaxanov (2007, 2), Kazakh titles amounted to 453 compared to 2,303 Russian (19.7% to 80.3%). He added that 5,248 titles of newspapers and journals were imported from Russia (officially 2,728). However, the strong position of Shymkent and Türkistan province is evident from the fact that around half of these 453 titles were published in this province. Therefore, Shymkent is certainly the stronghold of the Kazakh press. However, the supply of Kazakh newspapers and illustrated magazines is poor, and their proportion to the Russian titles, as seen at the newsagents, is low.

When we look at official figures (Şımkent qalasına 2017), the situation at the end of the 2010 was very good.⁸ There were 14 newspapers indicated as Kazakh and 56 additional not indicated, but with the Kazakh titles, some known to this author as Kazakh, the other being possibly Kazakh and bilingual Kazakh-Russian, and some others indicated as bilingual. However, many of these newspapers were printed in a very low number of copies, not surpassing a few hundred. At this point, the term ‘newspaper’ must be explained in relation to the situation in Kazakhstan. Apart from one nationwide government newspaper (*Egemen Qazaqstan*), which is mostly distributed and subscribed by the state and public institutions and not sold at newspaper agents, there is no Kazakh newspaper that appears throughout the week. Most newspapers appear two or three times a week, and only a few four times a week. Moreover, some newspapers are actually weekly and biweekly. The difference between a newspaper and a journal is format and volume rather than the frequency of publication.

⁷ See <http://qazyna.kz>.

⁸ The municipality website ceased to provide this annual report and the figures are not available any longer.

Below, there is a selection of Kazakh newspapers published in Shymkent, some also distributed in other regions of Kazakhstan. Firstly, there are two newspapers published by governmental institutions:

1. *Oñtüstik Qazaqstan* ‘South Kazakhstan’, was the biggest newspaper in the former South Kazakhstan province, and now, although it has retained its name and is still edited and printed in Shymkent, is presented as the Türkistan province sociopolitical newspaper. It comes out three times a week. For instance, the number of copies of the issue of 2 August 2020 was 36,461. The newspaper also has a website (<http://okg.kz>). As *Egemen Qazaqstan*, it is also distributed to state organs and subscribed by public institutions, but it can be downloaded from the website in a PDF format. This newspaper is also published in Russian and Uzbek as *Yuzhnyy Kazakhstan* and *Janubiy Qozog’iston*, respectively. Both have their own websites (<https://yujanka.kz>) and (<http://janubiy.kz>), but they are completely different.
2. *Şymkent Kelbeti* ‘Shymkent Visage; Shymkent Panorama’ is a biweekly published in two separate Kazakh and Russian versions, the latter being called *Panorama Shymkenta*. Both versions have separate websites, <http://shymkala.kz> and <https://panorama.shymkala.kz>, respectively. It is published by the mayor of Shymkent, and articles published online appear irregularly.

Since these two newspapers are normally subscribed by the state and public institutions and not sold at newspaper agents, the real number of readers is difficult to assess. However, as we can see from *Şymkent Kelbeti* which has a counter of readings on its website with the articles marked as most read, the number of readers is low and rarely exceeds one hundred.

There are also three newspapers published by private companies, but they are not independent in the sense of internationally recognized independent newspapers and the only Kazakhstani oppositional newspaper is *Jas Alaş*:

1. *Reyting* ‘Rating’, an informational-analytical weekly, has been published since 2008. It is printed on twelve pages and is distributed in approx. 10,000 copies. Some articles are quite critical of local administration and flaws. It is distributed in the whole of Kazakhstan. *Reyting* does not have a website.
2. *Waqt* ‘Time’, a socio-political weekly, has been published since 2011. It is printed on six pages and distributed in 9000 copies. It has a website (<http://uaqyt.kz>) and can be read online.
3. *Özge Pikir* ‘Another Opinion’, an informational-analytical and legal weekly, has been published since 2015. It is printed on eight pages and distributed in 3000 copies only, but it also has a website (<http://ozgepikir.kz>) and can be read online. In contrast to *Waqt*, this weekly publishes articles which are more analytical and critical of the authorities.

Another type of periodicals called *gazet* ‘newspaper’ are women’s newspapers. Some can boast a relatively high number of printed copies in relation to other

newspapers of similar quality and format. For instance, *Äyel Qupıyası* ‘Woman’s Secret’, a biweekly, was printed in 2018 in 7,500 copies (issue 13 of 8 July 2018) and *Ädemiy Äyel* ‘Pretty Woman’, also a biweekly, had 4,120 copies at approximately the same time (issue 14 of July 2018).

There are three media companies that offer a range of media products:

1. *Ayğaq* (full name *Ayğaq Teleradyokompaniyası* ‘TV-Radio Company’), broadcasts a local TV channel, see below, publishes a weekly and has a website (<http://aigak.kz>).
2. *Otyrar-Kz* is a company that runs various media with the focus on Shymkent and the province. Firstly, it has broadcasting a TV channel since 1992, which is also available online (<https://kz.otyrrar.kz/live/>) via YouTube. Secondly, it owns an online newspaper (<https://kz.otyrrar.kz>) in two editions, Kazakh and Russian. Thirdly, it has published a weekly called *Oñtüstik* (*Óntüstik*) *Rabat* (<https://kz.otyrrar.kz/onrabat>), which is called a social newspaper, and is distributed in 5000 copies since 2010. This weekly came to life to balance the Russian *Rabat* weekly, which the company started publishing in 2001. *Rabat* is distributed in at least 10,000 copies, but it is an advertising newspaper.
3. *Zamana* ‘Time’ is a Press Group active since 1998. In contrast to the preceding company, it focuses on publishing weeklies and biweeklies. The basic weekly is *Zamana* ‘Time’, and the others are *Awırmañız* ‘Do not fall sick’ about health and *Kerek Keñester* ‘Useful Advice’ targeted at everybody. It has a website (<http://www.zamana.kz/kz>) which is, however, not updated regularly. For example, the website visited on 9 August 2020 showed the latest news from 11 May. The number of weeklies published by this publisher seems to be decreasing, as in the past it offered more titles, e.g. *Qızıq Gazet* ‘Interesting Newspaper’, *Tılsımdı Düniye* ‘Magic World’ for wonders, secrets and miracles, and the *Abısın* ‘The wives of brothers’ journal.

All press materials are published in small formats and in a low number of copies. In recent years there have been many other ephemeral newspapers, mostly weeklies and biweeklies, published in Shymkent and distributed in other regions of the country that focused on family, health, cuisine, gossip, famous people, stars and singers, e.g. *Jüz Jasañız* ‘Live a Hundred Years’, a countrywide weekly about wonderful advices (*keremet keñeske tolı Respublikalıq basılıım*) and crossword periodicals, e.g. *Zerek* ‘Clever’, *Xıkayat* ‘Story’, *Pil* ‘Elephant’ and *Oy Jumbaq* ‘Riddles’.

There is only one weekly devoted to popular topics which, in relation to others, can boast a high number of copies. It is *Altın Bosağa* ‘Gold Gate’, a countrywide family weekly (*Respublikalıq otbasılıq gazet*), published since 2007, with a distribution of 35,300 copies. Its success is due to the idea of publishing stories recounted by the readers. An additional attraction is probably the ad with the matrimonial page.

3.3. Kazakh radio and TV

There is one entirely Kazakh TV channel in the province, *Ayğaq*, that broadcasts 14 hours a day, and one fully Kazakh radio broadcasting, *Sarıağaç*. Six other TV channels are registered in Shymkent, four of which have a local character and are bilingual Kazakh-Russian, as well as other radio stations.

3.4. Online media registered in Shymkent

The number of Kazakh websites is growing. However, since the Internet is worldwide and may be accessed everywhere, the online media registered in Shymkent cannot be evaluated as local media. The major online newspaper is Ernur.Kz (<http://ernur.kz>). In contrast to Zamana, it is regularly updated and has many sections such as the news, health, family, show business, entertainment, events, most of which are subdivided into subsections, e.g. the news include events from Türkistan province, Shymkent, Kazakhstan, the world, sport and society. It should be noted that the Ernur company branch, Ernur Print offers printing services, and the province's biggest newspaper, *Oñtüstik Qazaqstan*, is printed there.

Conclusion

The linguistic landscape of Shymkent is diversified. The overwhelming majority of the Kazakh population are Kazakh-Russian bilingual speakers. They do not speak Kazakh in contact with the Russians and Russian-speaking people. Code-mixing and code-switching are very common, especially in the discourse of adults. The Russians are mostly monolingual. Therefore, Russian used by them is free of code-mixing and code-switching. Trilingual people speak Kazakh, Russian, and their ethnic languages, mostly Uzbek and Uighur.

Kazakh is spoken by low-educated Kazakhs and Kazakhs with Russian as their first language, although the latter speak very poor Kazakh and are unable to express anything more than the absolute core vocabulary of a few hundred words. Some sellers of technical appliances at marketplaces and shops, as well as the sellers of technology products, prefer to speak Russian to the clients, for they do not know Kazakh terms. The situation is even more advantageous to Russians in the field of computer, communication and information technology since all programmes and systems are in Russian. In contrast, the language spoken by many schoolchildren educated in Kazakh schools is rich in lexicon and free of code-mixing. The language of educated adults depends on their educational background, family, profession and individual preferences. Well-educated Uzbeks and Uighurs speak both Kazakh and Russian very well. In the case of a low-educated trilingual

population, their competence in Kazakh depends on contact with Kazakhs. Those living in dense Uzbek communities, e.g. Sayram, often use a mixed Uzbek-Kazakh language in contact with the Kazakhs.

This situation will not change as long as the current language policy is in force. Language policy in Kazakhstan is symbolic (Dave 2007, 97), and roughly the same may be said about the language policy as practised by the administration in Türkistan province. However, since Qasym-Jomart Toqayev has become the new president, he seems to give more space to the state language.

Russian is still an inter ethnic language in Kazakhstan. The written language in almost all spheres of public life is also Russian. Russian-speakers are afraid they may lose their privileges and try to defend their position. It will be a great challenge for the Kazakh authorities and the local administration to make Kazakh a real state and an inter ethnic language in Kazakhstan and in the new province of Türkistan without arousing a language conflict. They will have to convince the titular nation of the usefulness and the functionality of their ethnic language, but they must first acknowledge it and start to use it publicly themselves. A much more difficult task will be to encourage the Russians to learn Kazakh seriously and to use it. Once this process starts, it will last a full generation at least.

Despite some negative factors, Kazakh is not endangered because the Kazakhs normally use their titular language among themselves.

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