

# Linguistics Variations in Teaching Learning Process: An Analytical View of Education System in Central Asian Republics

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## Abstract

This paper looks at the language contexts and script modifications in Central Asian Republics (CARs, henceforth) during the Soviet Union as well as following their independence. It looks at how the Russian language fits within the Central Asian education system, particularly in higher education. Following their independence, these governments had several language changes, particularly script modifications, which presented numerous difficulties and led to numerous disparities in schooling due to minimizing Russian from their countries. Since the majority of higher education in Central Asian nations still relies on Russian instruction, the removal of the Russian language from the curriculum generated numerous issues in every state, especially for young people just beginning their higher education. In order to prepare their younger population for higher education at universities or for travel to Russia for employment or study purposes, these

republics began pushing the Russian language again in their educational systems ten years after gaining their independence. The language and script developments in the CARs during various post-independence periods, as well as the difficulties that each state encountered independently, are the main topics of this study. The purpose of this research is to compare how the Russian language is taught and revived in the educational systems of Central Asian countries after their independence.

**Keywords:** Linguistic Variations, Russia, Central Asian Republics, Education System, Teaching, Learning.

## Introduction

In order to support their indigenous languages and their sovereignty, CARs sought to reduce the amount of linguistic variation in their educational systems during the first ten years. Due to changes in the educational system and the migration of Russian speakers to Russia, the use of the Russian language dropped in these recently independent states. However, for a variety of reasons, Russian started to resurrect in the ensuing decades. This study will examine the Russian language's decline in the first ten years of independence, its gradual promotion, and its eventual resurgence, using data and statistics from each of the five Central Asian nations individually. The Russian language was written in Cyrillic script in the Soviet Union prior to its dissolution. Many post-Soviet nations also changed their scripts after gaining independence in an effort to reduce Russian influence and eliminate the Russian language. The writing style that a nation's government has established as the standard for that nation is known as an official script. Official scripts are frequently employed in countries where the majority of languages may be written using two or more different scripts/alphabets (Holloway, 2023). When there are several competing scripts, a country's official script handles a variety of functions. Standardizing the script used by government entities and simplifying the printing and duplication of official documents facilitates communication (Holloway, 2023). The Cyrillic script has been used primarily in Russia, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe to write more than 120 other languages. The Cyrillic script is named for the Byzantine missionary Saint Cyril, who co-created the Glagolitic script with his brother, Saint Methodius. Boris I of Bulgaria (орис I) developed the 'Early Cyrillic script in the ninth century during the First Bulgarian Empire' (681–1018 AD). It was the basis for the creation of the contemporary Cyrillic alphabets that form the basis of all Slavonic languages (Cyrillic Script, 2023). According to Tolipov (2017), the official script (alphabet) underwent four changes under the Soviet Union. In 1929, it was changed from Arabic script to Latin script (also called Roman script, which is the basis for the languages of Western Europe today). In 1940, it was changed once again to Cyrillic script. Actually, for the last fifty years or more, Cyrillic has been the official alphabet of Central Asia. Only a small percentage of

individuals worldwide have used all four scripts in the same century: Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic, and Latin. In the old Soviet Union, Latin and Cyrillic did coexist happily (Tolipov, 2017). The approach used for this specific work is thematic analysis of the data gathered, and the methodology is primarily qualitative in nature. Hermeneutic and double hermeneutic approaches have been used to understand and reinterpret secondary sources in light of recent advances in the subject area. Each CAR's script alterations are explored per country, as is the role and significance of the Russian language in the current educational system.

## Linguistic Variation in Uzbekistani Education System

According to Uzbekistan's current linguistic status, the capital, as well as some regional cities and district centers, speak Russian as their primary language. Although this language lacks a specific legal status, there is no official restriction on its legitimacy ("Language Situation in Uzbekistan," 2022). The government's effort to update the script for the Uzbek (local) language, which had lain non-active since 1993 when laws pertaining to the switch to the Latin script were passed, has recently witnessed a discernible rise in activity during the years of independence. When the adopted Latin alphabet was audited in 1995, a revised form was condemned (Ильхамов, 2021). As part of the derussification process, the Uzbek government demanded a complete conversion to Latin script by the year 2000. Most course materials were still printed in Cyrillic at the time, and the majority of schools had switched to Latin character. Cyrillic was used and understood by more students than Latin orthography. Although Uzbekistan's ultimate goal was to move to Latin, the nation lacked a clear plan for the changeover. As late as 2001, there was no standard system for spelling Uzbek in the Latin alphabet. There are multiple spellings of the same term because the Uzbeks transliterated words based on their own emotions. The government may have introduced uniform spelling, but most Uzbeks were unaware of it. The introduction of Latin was also haphazard; while some shops had switched to the Latin script, most had not, leaving a strange mix of Latin and Cyrillic. The Uzbek government had created a new language policy, but it had no plans to implement it. Because Uzbek officials desired a uniform written law requiring inhabitants to learn the language or without enforcing the switch to the Latin alphabet, it was difficult for the Uzbek language to develop (Boehmer, 2007). However, the apparent turbulence surrounding the question of what the Uzbek alphabet should look like may irritate even the younger generation. To summarize the past, Latin and Cyrillic have coexisted in a very steady way across the country. It must be admitted that the country's book publishing business has deteriorated somewhat since independence. Therefore, as of 2017, just a few book publishers were active in the country, mainly Davr Press, O'qituvchi, Akademnashr, and O'zbekiston. The majority of them are works for older readers in Cyrillic and textbooks and novels for young readers in Latin (Ильхамов, 2021). Another problem that has received a lot of attention lately is the decline in Uzbek writing system among young individuals

who have completed high school and are enrolled in universities . This problem is often associated with the Latin alphabets. When the script was rewritten, the so-called "phased introduction" was ineffective.

The chaos in the way the laws are being applied is one among other reasons why the Latin script has not gained popularity in Uzbekistan. Education is one of the many areas in which Uzbekistan is undergoing significant improvements. Specifically, the choice to teach foreign languages—Russian in particular—is becoming increasingly significant (Narmatova & Abdurakhmanova, 2022). Beginning in the year 2000, the Russian language began to reappear in Uzbekistan's educational system. Studying Russian is a required subject in both elementary and higher education institutes. Every one of the 63 universities in Uzbekistan mandates that students learn Russian. The only language of instruction at Fergana State University is Russian. 28 public schools in Bukhara province provide instruction in Russian as well as Uzbek as of October 1, 2022, with six of the institutions using Russian as their major language of instruction. Russian-taught classes are being taken by 20198 pupils in grades 1 through 11. As more pupils attend schools where Russian is the major language, this trend improves annually. Since 2021, Russian has been taught as a foreign language at schools that also employ Uzbek and other languages of instruction. Given the current state of the Russian language and the need to resolve scientific and methodological issues, Russian scientists and methodologists from both Russia and Uzbekistan are working together on a number of projects.

One notable example of this kind of cooperation is the ten-year-long combined Russian-Uzbek project called "Class ("ZUR")". The first phase of the project began in September 2020. The project aims to improve the quality of Russian language education in Uzbekistan for both native speakers and those learning the language as a second language. Professionals from the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A. I. Herzen, the project's parent organization, conducted a comprehensive diagnostic to determine the level of proficiency of instructors and pupils in the Russian language. In 2020 and the first half of 2021, almost 13,000 teachers and students participated in interviews, specialized competency tests, and language assessments in Russian. More than 100 Russian teachers were engaged by 70 rural schools spread over 14 different regions of the republic. The development of Speaking fluently and being able to communicate in Russian to carry out tasks in the workplace and students' everyday lives are the main objectives of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Another goal is to create linguistic competence aimed at raising students' oral and written reading proficiency. In Uzbekistan, a unified national program has been established to teach Russian, which is considered a foreign language. When selecting language resources, factors like student accessibility and the efficiency and structure of the Russian language are taken into account (Web of Synergy: International Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 2023).

## Linguistic Variation in Kazakhstani Education System

Kazakhstan has enacted three constitutions related to language development. Russian was designated as the interethnic language and Kazakh as the official state language in the first constitution of 1993. Due to this ruling, Kazakh people who were not native speakers were required to learn and speak the language. Because there were far fewer native Russian speakers in state entities, the language choice had negative effects. This intensive campaign led to the exodus of ethnic Russians and other Russian speakers. Consequently, in 1995 and 1998, Kazakhstan passed two further constitutions pertaining to language. These two constitutions were seen as additional attempts to improve Kazakh's standing. The political justice that prompted Russian emigration to the country was demonstrated by this decision (Terlikbayeva & Menlibekova, 2021). In regard to language evolution, Terlikbayeva & Menlibekova (2021) contend that Orthographic reform that frequently involves a purposeful or officially approved modification to spelling rules is a hotly debated subject among Kazakhstani scholars. During 2017, Nazarbayev signed an order to change the Cyrillic alphabet to Latin writing. It is important to remember that this will be Kazakhstan's third alphabet change in its history. In 1929, Arabic lettering was replaced with Latin. Later in 1940, Arabic gave way to the Cyrillic alphabet. Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan all adopted the Latin alphabet immediately following the collapse of Soviet Union. The alphabet change was viewed as a political risk because there were more non-native ethnic groups in Kazakhstan than native groups, and neither nation could afford to implement the move. Before being implemented by 2025, the alphabet shift plan is anticipated to undergo a half-decade planning phase. In Kazakhstan, corpus planning—the process of organizing changes to a language's structure, such as its grammar and vocabulary— involves a large amount of alphabet shift efforts and the development of new terms; nonetheless (Terlikbayeva & Menlibekova, 2021). According to official news sources, the government has set aside about 300 million tenge (\$922,000) for each of the years 2018 and 2019, according to Eldar Madumarov, an economist and lecturer at KIMEP University in Almaty. Basic and secondary school education would be funded using this money. In Kazakh civilization, ideas are communicated through a hybrid language. When speaking Kazakh, it is beneficial to use Russian phrases because it seems that employing freshly formed terminology makes it harder to understand. In Kazakhstan's public and political life, the Cyrillic character is still widely used today. During the first 25 years of post-Soviet expansion, the state did not enforce its language and alphabet policy, instead emphasizing an evolutionary pace. However, this strategy has gained new traction recently, given that the public has had ample opportunity to understand works written in Latin script. In April 2016, the Kazakh government formally announced that they would be moving to the Latin script after 25 years of independence. According to Tolipov (2017), these current movements had the effect of a red rag on a bull and provoked a very negative reaction from them in Russia's social media, intelligentsia, and media. In the twenty-first century,

Central Asians truly gain from speaking Russian and other foreign languages in addition to their local tongues, as well as using both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets (Tolipov, 2017). In December 2012, the Kazakhstan-2020 national strategy was revised to reflect the change in the alphabet. In his essay, Nazarbayev said that learning a new alphabet would be easy for younger people. During the transition to the new alphabet, Cyrillic will remain in use (Rysaliev, 2017). In October, the Kazakh government adopted a new alphabet based on a Latin script to replace the country's current Cyrillic alphabet. Nonetheless, the public has expressed its dissatisfaction, which is uncommon in this ostensibly democratic country that has been under Nazarbayev's strict control for more than thirty years (Chen, 2022b).

Regarding the Russian higher education system, English instruction has recently increased in certain of these republics, especially in higher education as 'English Medium Instruction (EMI)'. The way English is taught and utilized in these countries, however, presents a number of challenges. These challenges include inadequate language proficiency, a shortage of materials, and a lack of English support for teachers and students at EMI universities. Students and teachers encounter other difficulties in addition to these restrictions. In settings where English is a foreign language, both teachers and students must devote extra time to learning the language and becoming prepared for class. Furthermore, it takes longer to learn material when studying a foreign language. Compared to students studying in Russian or their own tongue, students in EMI contexts participate in less class discussion. As a result, connections in the classroom weaken and students' overall performance in the class declines. It also makes kids struggle academically (Bezborodova & Radjabzade, 2021). Kazakhstani students can also find good opportunities in Russia.

## Linguistic Variation in Kyrgyzstani Education System

Kyrgyzstan, a Turkic-speaking country, is the only one that frequently uses the Cyrillic script. In 1993, Kyrgyz became the only official language of Kyrgyzstan following the passage of their constitution. Following the adoption of a new constitution, a significant number of Russian citizens departed because they felt their linguistic rights were being violated. Because they felt their chances of success were diminished without these language rights, many Russians and other minority ethnic Europeans chose to leave the country rather than comply with the new laws. Kyrgyz officials are discussing whether to switch the Kyrgyz language from its Russian-based Cyrillic alphabet to a Latin one. During Kanybek Isakov's confirmation hearing in parliament on September 11, the topic was raised: "I support the use of the Latin alphabet." "We need to conduct the required work in phases," Isakov said in response to a question about it posed by legislator Altynbek Sulaimanov. Kazakhstan is scheduled to transition in 2025, making us the final Turkic peoples to do so. We would be going back to the Latin alphabet instead of converting to it because

we have been using it [from 1928 to 1940] (Altynbayev, 2019). Dastan Bekeshev, a lawmaker, supported the switch but cautioned that it would require time to transition to the Latin alphabet. "This is a rather expensive project, so Kyrgyzstan will need to solve its most urgent day-to-day problems first," he told reporters. Arabic script was once used by the Kyrgyz. Kyrgyzstan first utilized Arabic script during Soviet administration before converting to the Latin alphabet from 1928 till 1940, and at last settled on Cyrillic (Altynbayev, 2019).

## Linguistic Variation in Tajikistani Education System

Regarding the advancement of education, particularly in research and secondary and tertiary education, Tajikistan was the least developed country in the Soviet Union, completely reliant on federal assistance, and ranked last. Most people in Tajikistan, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan speak Tajik, a dialect of Persian. The Perso-Arabic script was initially used to write the Tajik language. From 1928 to 1940, the Latin alphabet was used, and then a modified Cyrillic alphabet was used. The Tajik government then passed a law in 1989 requiring the Arabic alphabet to be reinstated. The Latin alphabet is also widely supported ("Tajik language, alphabet and pronunciation," 2022). Russian, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek were the languages taught in the state school system before to 1991. Schools that taught mostly Russian began teaching Tajik as a second language in all grade levels when Tajik was made the official language in 1989. After gaining independence, Tajik language and literature—including the study of traditional Persian literature—became more prominent in school curricula (Aminov et al, 2011). Higher education institutes offer Russian streams. 'The Russian-Tajik Slavic University' only offers instruction in Russian.

30,058 (25.4%) of Tajikistan's 118,427 university students were enrolled in Russian-language courses at the close of the country's second decade of independence. The creation of new institutions and the conversion of large Soviet institutes into universities have had a significant impact on the higher education landscape. The bulk of students in this area are now university students rather than institutes. Both the number of enrolled students and the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) have increased significantly (Huisman et al., 2018, p. 363). During a discussion at "The Tajik Centre for Strategic Studies," parliamentarian Ismoil Talbakov made the most pragmatic objection, asserting that, at a time when Tajikistan's economy was experiencing severe instability, translating the documentation of about 100,000 organizations, enterprises, and businesses from Russian to Tajik was inefficient and would be very expensive (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2009). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018), Tajikistan's economic woes seemed to be the reason why many Russians left the nation at the start of the twenty-first century. During the meeting, Tajikistan's president, Emomali Rahmon, stated that our endeavors to expand access to Russian-language secondary and higher education are yielding the expected results. Over 27,000 students

are currently enrolled in 39 Tajikistani schools where Russian is the primary language of instruction. There are also about 70,000 students enrolled in 160 mixed Tajik-Russian schools. It was determined to take more measures in this regard to advance and promote Russian in Tajikistan and other Commonwealth nations '(Tajik language, alphabet and pronunciation, 2022)'.

## Linguistic Variation in Turkmenistani Education System

After gaining independence, Turkmenistan vowed to fundamentally reform its educational system. The 'Bilim' (Knowledge) program was really launched by the government in May 1993. This program established new curricula, completely de-Sovietized educational institutions, and fundamentally changed the secondary and higher educational systems. The new Turkmen script, which employs the Latin alphabet, took the place of the earlier one, which was based on the Cyrillic alphabet. However, the state continued to have strict control over the educational sector. After such great advancements, such important discussions and intellectual disputes were unavoidable. Approximately 97–98% of Turkmenistan's population is literate as of the country's second decade of independence, and all school-age children are served by the educational system without any discrimination against girls. They also boasted that, unlike Tajikistan and Afghanistan, no Taliban-style radical madrassahs (Islamic schools) had been created in the country in the 1990s and that all pupils were taught a secular curriculum. Turkmen was adopted as the primary language of instruction in all educational institutions (Abazov, 2008). Prior to 1993, a variation of the Cyrillic script was frequently used to write the Turkmen language. Since 1993, Roman has been the only official script in use. Turkmen use the 23 letters of the Roman alphabet. Though it was still in use for the Russian language in Turkmenistan before to 1993, the Cyrillic script is no longer utilized for writing Turkmen (Toponymic Factifile, Turkmenistan, 2023).

After discussing the linguistic differences in Turkmenistan's educational system, it is determined that Turkmen use a variety of methods to apply to Russian institutions. In order to occupy a desired state-funded quota position, many of them work very hard. Some high school seniors compete actively in online international and collegiate Olympiads, winning prizes and receiving admission bonuses. Even if tuition is necessary, many students are keen to attend because of Turkmenistan's high demand for Russian education. 46% of Turkmenistan's population is thought to be under 24. But only 7% of the 100,000 graduates that took place annually in 2014 were accepted by the local colleges because they were unable to accommodate this number. Therefore, the majority of young people want to pursue higher education in Russia. Between 2004 and 2014, despite the lack of educational resources in the nation, the government refused to recognize foreign degrees in an attempt to discourage Turkmen citizens from studying abroad. In 2009,



only 2,700 Turkmen citizens departed their homeland to study abroad. In 2019, this figure rose. As of 2019, 11,628 migrants were in Russia on work visas, and more than 49,000 Turkmen students were studying there alone (The Oxus Society, 2022). People of different nationalities frequently utilize Russian in everyday talks. While Turkmen is primarily spoken in rural areas, Russian is the most common language in large urban places. The most promising employment opportunities are in the private sector or with multinational companies engaged in construction, oil, and gas, and city dwellers earn more money. Only a small percentage of people effectively use English and Turkish for communication, despite the fact that both languages are taught in schools and provide better job opportunities (Aminov et al, 2011).

## Conclusions

The Russian language lost its preferred status in all Central Asian states following the fall of the Soviet Union, but it retained its roll again later on. After independence, the script was switched to Latin, but Russian is still written in Cyrillic. Russian, a major foreign language throughout Central Asia, still has a lot of space to grow even in Turkmenistan. Russian provides access to the realms of science, art, and high culture. Despite this, the government continues to support the national languages above Russian in an attempt to fortify their country and shield its citizens from Russian influence. Attempts to eliminate Cyrillic script through script modifications have been unsuccessful. Russian continues to play a significant role in the economics and educational systems of Central Asian nations. Even now, Whether studying in Russia or their home countries, the majority of parents and young people prefer Russian institutions and colleges, and their higher education system continues to favor the Russian language. Russian language proficiency is still required for these states in order to develop qualified cadres, especially in the technical and scientific fields, and to gain access to the global information environment.

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