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## ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE PEOPLE OF KAZAKHSTAN: RESULTS OF A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

This article presents the results of sociological analysis of the population's assessment of the language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The main purpose of the research is to study the opinions of different social categories of Kazakhstani people on the issues of language policy conducted in the country. The results of the sociological survey conducted by the Language Policy Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (for 2021-2023) were the theoretical basis for this study.

The study analyzed the initial data using the qualitative method of Desk Research, the application of which, in turn, confirms the scientific and practical significance of the article.

As a result of the analysis, a number of differences were noted, giving the study a gendered perspective. The problems identified as a result of the study require further analysis, which increases the need to conduct an observation of the dynamics of the indicators identified during the writing of the article, which makes a certain contribution to scientific research in the field of sociolinguistics. The conclusions formulated in the course of the study make it possible to determine those optimal methods that will contribute to improving the effectiveness of language policy implementation in the country. In this respect, this article, its scientific results, can serve as a basis for the continuation of scientific analysis of this problem.

**Key words:** language policy, Kazakh language, Kazakhstanis, social groups, sociology.

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### Қазақстан халқының тіл саясатын бағалауы: әлеуметтік зерттеу нәтижелері

Бұл мақалада Қазақстан Республикасы халқының тіл саясатына баға беруін әлеуметтанулық талдау нәтижелері ұсынылған. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты елімізде жүргізіліп жатқан тіл саясаты мәселелері бойынша қазақстандықтардың түрлі әлеуметтік санаттарының пікірлерін зерделеу болып табылады. Бұл зерттеуді жүргізудің теориялық негізі Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің Тіл саясаты комитеті (2021-2023 жж.) жүргізген әлеуметтік сауалнаманың нәтижелері болды.

Зерттеу барысында сапалы Desk Research әдісін қолдана отырып, бастапқы деректерге талдау жасалды, оны қолдану өз кезегінде мақаланың ғылыми және практикалық маңыздылығын растайды.

Жүргізілген талдау нәтижесінде зерттеуге гендерлік сипат берген бірқатар өзгешеліктер атап өтілді. Зерттеу нәтижесінде анықталған мәселелер одан әрі талдауды қажет етеді, бұл әлеуметтік лингвистика саласындағы ғылыми зерттеулерге белгілі бір үлес қосады, мақаланы жазу барысында анықталған көрсеткіштердің динамикасына бақылау жүргізу қажеттілігін арттырады. Зерттеу барысында алынған тұжырымдар елде тіл саясатын жүргізудің тиімділігін арттыруға ықпал ететін оңтайлы әдістерді анықтауға мүмкіндік береді. Осыған байланысты бұл мақала мен оның ғылыми нәтижелері осы мәселені ғылыми талдауды жалғастыруға негіз бола алады.

**Түйін сөздер:** тіл саясаты, қазақ тілі, қазақстандықтар, әлеуметтік топтар, әлеуметтану.

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### **Оценка языковой политики населением Казахстана: результаты социологического исследования**

В данной статье представлены результаты социологического анализа оценки населением проводимой языковой политики в Республике Казахстан. Основной целью исследования является изучение мнений различных социальных категорий казахстанцев по вопросам проводимой в стране языковой политики. Теоретическим основанием для проведения данного исследования явились результаты социологического опроса, проведенного Комитетом языковой политики Министерства науки и высшего образования Республики Казахстан (за 2021-2023 гг.).

В исследовании был проведен анализ исходных данных с использованием качественного метода Desk Research, применение которого, в свою очередь, подтверждает научную и практическую значимость статьи.

В результате проведенного анализа был отмечен ряд различий, придавший исследованию гендерный характер. Проблемы, выявленные в результате исследования, требуют дальнейшего анализа, что повышает необходимость проведения наблюдения за динамикой показателей, выявленных в ходе написания статьи, которая вносит определенный вклад в научные исследования в области социолингвистики. Выводы, сформулированные в ходе проведения исследования, дают возможность определять те оптимальные методы, которые будут способствовать повышению эффективности проведения языковой политики в стране. В этом отношении данная статья, ее научные результаты, может послужить основой для продолжения научного анализа этой проблемы.

**Ключевые слова:** языковая политика, казахский язык, казахстанцы, социальные группы, социология.

## **Introduction**

Assessment of language policy by the population of Kazakhstan is an important area of socio-linguistic research, given the multilingual nature of the country and the role of language in national identity and social integration.

Language is the main means of communication in society. The formation and development of language in the country directly depends on language policy. Each state has its own language policy for the development of the language. Language policy is a political-social, cultural, linguistic category that emerges from history. Given the special historical and ethnic composition of Kazakhstan, it is possible to constantly study and predict the development of differentiated language policy in the country with the help of sociological studies. The basis of the formation of any state as a country is the existence of territory, people, language, religion, national values. Among them, it is important that the state be formed as a nation, even if it has population and territory.

In fact, language policy can be seen as a set of measures aimed at the conscious influence of the state on language. Kazakhstan, as a multinational state, adheres to this direction of Due to the fact that many ethnic groups live in Kazakhstan, the state ad-

heres to this direction of influencing them, including through language policy, the development of the Kazakh language and the development of languages of other ethnic groups is envisaged in the state. To do this, the state purposefully uses effective approaches necessary for the development of the language.

In this regard, one of the tools leading to important indicators in the implementation of language policy is the modernization of the Kazakh language through the introduction of the Latin alphabet and increasing the level of use of the Kazakh language as a scientific language in society. Contributes to the formation of a sense of respect for the culture and history of the people of Kazakhstan through the development of language. The concepts of multilingualism and multiculturalism include the study of situations in which different languages coexist within a community or geographical region. This may include analysis of language policies, mechanisms for the preservation and development of minority languages, and the impact of migration on the linguistic situation. In the conditions of Kazakhstan, the factor of multiculturalism may be more relevant than that of multi-lingualism. This is due to the fact that the culture of ethnic groups, who have long lived in our country, is approaching a common culture. Never-

theless, in the state citizens of Kazakhstan have the right to live freely, preserve, promote their culture, regardless of nationality, race, religion, sex of any person, as provided by law, provided that it does not harm the life of other people?

The realization and preservation of cultural values can be a guarantee that the state will adhere to the correct language policy. Despite this, the life of society is influenced by domestic, socio-economic, geographical and migration processes. These changes may include the language situation, so periodic monitoring of the population's opinion on implementation and development of language policy is relevant.

The relevance of language policy study, first, the emergence of problems related to language policy among the population or the frequency of problems underlying the language problem. Secondly, the problem of language is seen as a necessary tool for preserving cultural, educational, communication principles of society or ethnic groups. Third, the observance of language policy is considered as a basis for security and future development of the state, since through language there is an opportunity to update important industries in the country, such as training of competitive specialists in the economic sphere, establishing relations with foreign countries, achieving success in the field of culture and others.

### Literature review

The issue of language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan is considered at the state level and annually on behalf of the Committee of Language Policy of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education; a sociological study is conducted to identify the importance for the population of possession languages, knowledge, and support of the state language policy (2021, 2022, and 2023). Above all, it acts at the state level, determining the importance and level of use of the state language in different spheres and regions of the country, identifying important issues that need to be solved in the modern world. First of all, language policy is regulated by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan», especially if it is about the modern state and level of development of language policy, problems of implementation of language policy, etc. (1997).

One of the important steps in the development of language policy is the launch of the state program for implementation of the language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025. This

program was created within the framework of implementing the tasks set by the Head of State of Kasym-Zhomart-Tokaev in the Message to the People of Kazakhstan of September 2, 2019 (Tokaev, 2019). The main focus here is on the importance of strengthening the Kazakh language as a state language for inter-ethnic communication.

Among the domestic authors, you can see works of Arman Kasimbaev, Aisha Bitkeeva, Ali Nysanbayeva, also works of Sergei Lenchenko, Milton Esman, Elena Shomani, Charlene Rivera, Eric Kollum and others. Language policy students of recent years.

Arman Kasimbayev (Kasymbayev, 2022) conducted political research on modern strategies for the development of language policy. He considers the tense subtext of language politics in a multi-ethnic country, especially from the perspective of ethnic pluralism. The study is based on the experience of countries in Southeast Asia using a comparative historical method.

Milton Esman (Milton, 1992) says that the language problem is a critical problem of states divided into multi-ethnic groups and that the state adheres to the language policy for resolving inter-ethnic conflicts. But there may be social pressure that prevents the implementation of language policy. According to him, the priority of one language in the country compared with multilingualism will inevitably increase the effectiveness of the state language policy. But the author's proposal to choose only one language is among the long-term strategies that can be achieved for our country over a quarter century, including ethnic factors in the country, The border location of Kazakhstan with other countries and transit role in trade among Central Asian countries. Therefore, it is doubtful that the prescription of one language will improve the state's language policy, so we cannot assume that a unilateral move is correct.

Elena Shohomani (Elana, 2008) led the language policy to the introduction of language tests in education and its influence on the development of language. In a multilingual state, it is important that children choose their mother tongue and learn other languages or the national language in parallel, which helps to eliminate linguistic differences between migrant and indigenous children. She also argues that by introducing language tests, the state can develop an official language alongside world languages. The exact conclusions of the author that the widespread introduction of language tests in education affects the development of language are

true, it is widely used in our country, for example, a civil servant must pass KAZTEST on Kazakh language, but at the same time it cannot be said. The level of proficiency in Kazakh language in the country is 100%. Therefore, you can see that this system has mechanisms that do not work.

Language problems in the field of education, particularly in secondary education, were also studied, as reflected in the analysis of the results of the Unified National Testing of School Graduates of Kazakhstan (Shabdenova, 2024). In this context, ways to increase the effectiveness of language policy by streamlining language issues in secondary education are differentiated. This promotes the teaching of future generations in their native language, the preservation and development of their ethnic language and strengthens the mechanisms for the development of the state language. This may be considered as the beginning of mechanisms for development of language policy, since a deeper differentiation of language issues in education requires more extensive study.

Charlene Rivera and Eric Collum (Charlene et al., 2005) proposed a focused analysis of state policies and practices to assess the knowledge of those who learn English. This approach demonstrates the need to respect the state language policy, which allows the development of language teaching. In this regard, trilingual education is practised in Kazakhstan and in some places is implemented on an experimental basis, especially in higher educational institutions where emphasis is placed on a deeper learning of the English language, which strengthens the State's links with foreign countries, Allows you to master the world education and science.

Similarly, the criteria for analyzing language policy in Nicole Pinilla require a level of language proficiency and development, especially of people's language and identification with one specific nation (Nykoll, 2018). According to the author, this is related to the assimilation of national values by society, because the nationality and language of any person go hand in hand. Unfortunately, the long stay of Kazakhstan in the Russian colony, a complete immersion of the Russian language into practice concerned citizens of Kazakh nationality who lived and studied until the 90s. Being a Kazakh nationality, having been educated only in Russian and formed in the Russian-speaking environment, mastering the state language becomes a difficult situation, so studying the national identity of Kazakhs may be

appropriate.

The regional aspect of influence of language policy on economic policy was investigated by Russian Federation Lynchenko S., he determined a close link between language policy and economic policy. Through language policy, he considers ways of influencing the level of education of the population, financial literacy, economic knowledge (Lynchenko et al., 2020). In contrast, Beatkeev Issa considers five models of language policy: one-component, two-component, three-component, multi-component and differential. The author believes that language policy is directly related to national identity and civil society through language legislation, as well as the desire of peoples to develop their languages (Bitkeeva, 2021). Therefore, it may be appropriate to enhance the national identity of the population by awakening an ethnic consciousness.

The analysis of literature showed that the main source of development of the language situation in sociological analysis, taking into account the specificity of development, the actual use of the state language at present is the population of the villages and southern regions. Among representatives of different specialties, the expression of the state language as a language of communication in practice with state authorities is known, and its reasons are explained by the fact that the state language is not used in the most important sectors of the economy. The proportion of English language is increasing.

## Materials and Methods

The study uses traditional methods and statistical methods: absolute, relative and average values, graphs, groupings, time series, indices, tables and much more. The sociological analysis of language policy studies focuses on understanding the social context and the impact that language policy has on different population groups.

The key methods and approaches to study of language politics in sociology can be mass surveys and population questionnaires. Surveys of various groups were conducted with the aim of knowing the language attitudes of the population, language proficiency and its level, and language policies among the population. In addition, mutual discussions between small groups determine the opinion and attitude of the population towards language policy. In particular, the use of targeted surveys, surveys among individual groups (youth, professionals, etc.) determines the direction of language policy. The



study used quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of language policy in sociology.

The first database of the study was the results of an annual mass survey conducted between 2021 and 2023 by the Language Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The sample population in the study included the population of Kazakhstan over the age of 18 in all regions. The number of respondents who participated in the study varied annually. So, in 2021-2022, the number of regions in the republic amounted to 17, of which 14 regions and the cities of Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, from 2023, including the regions of Abai, Zhetysay, Ulytau, the regions are united into 20 regions. The sample of the study is representative, it is selected according to the type of settlement, age, gender, nationality of the respondents.

The survey was conducted using a face-to-face methodology among 2000 respondents in 2021 and 2022 and 4000 respondents in 2023 (2021, 2022, 2023) with respect to the quota sample. The quota sample was analyzed using socio-demographic data of respondents, which included gender, age groups, nationality, education level, material status in the household.

The main question of the study: «How do you feel about language politics in Kazakhstan?».

The hypothesis of the study suggests that the people of Kazakhstan have a sufficient level of support for language politics, but among the population there may be those who are not indifferent to politics, who do not trust politics. It can be divided by the ethnic identity of the society, age characteristics, professional skills, level of education.

Statistical data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software to calculate correlation coefficient and check the significance of results.

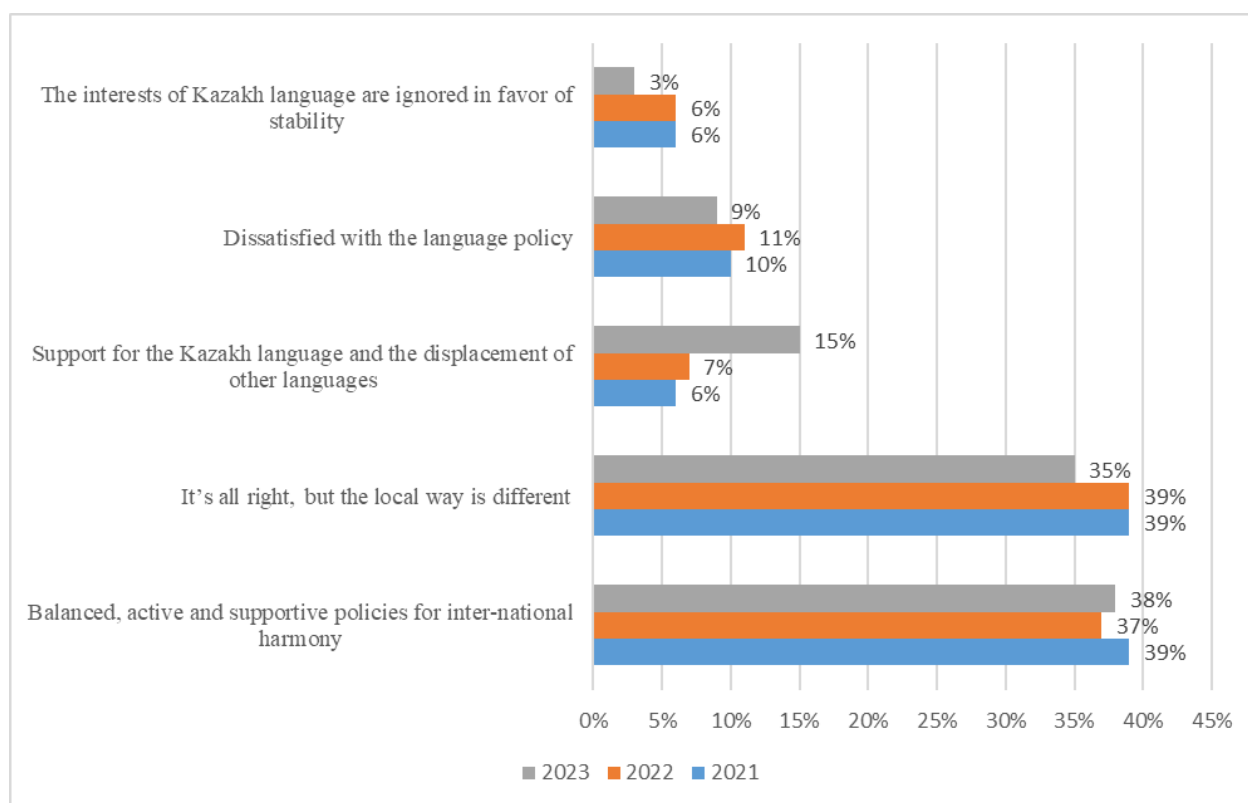
## Results and Discussion

It is useful to present a socio-demographic profile of the sample population of the study. Analysis of the characteristics of the respondents in the 2023 survey showed that the sample represented population by gender (48% male and 52% female), age groups (27% 18-29 years; 34% 30-45 years; 31% 46-60 years; 8% 61 years and above), nationality (68% Kazakhs, 18% Russians and 14% other nationalities). However, all population groups are represented in terms of education level (37% secondary

school, 35% vocational training, 27% higher), social and professional status (44% employed in organizations and sectors of various types and properties, 14% individual entrepreneurs and businessmen, 12% self-employed, 11% employed in farms and other services, 6% pensioners, 4% unemployed, 3% students, 3% disabled people who are not working, 3% housewives). The sample also represents the population in terms of marital status (58% married, 31% never married, 8% divorced, 3% widowed) and financial status (19% above average, 65% average, 10% below average and 6% in difficulty). Samples of previous surveys (2021 and 2022) similarly represent the population in approximate values (5%) as above.

In order to evaluate the language policy in the country, all respondents were asked a question: «How do you assess the language policy conducted in Kazakhstan?», the results of the responses are presented in Figure 1, it is a comparative data of three surveys conducted in 2021, 2022 and 2023. The data show that two positions are most common: on average 38% of the population share the opinion that «policies are balanced, active and promote inter-national harmony», another 38% believe that «everything is said correctly but done differently in the field». In 2023, the proportion of respondents sharing the opinion «support of the Kazakh language and the displacement of other languages» increased significantly: from 6% in 2021 to 15% in 2023. Almost one in ten Kazakhs (10%) is dissatisfied with the language policy. The opinion of «ignoring the interests of the Kazakh language in favor of stability» is the least common, with the proportion of respondents who share this opinion has decreased from 6% in 2021 and 2022 to 3% in 2023.

It is interesting to see which social groups are most likely to share the views outlined above. The question presented in figure 1 was analyzed according to socio-demographic characteristics. Some results are presented in table 1 – these are the most basic features that characterize society, other features are not presented in table 1 because of the many categories, but analysis was made on all features, significant differences are described below. For this purpose, the analysis of correlation tables was made taking into account the Hi-square statistics. The analysis was based on a database of the 2023 survey, where the sample consisted of 4,000 respondents.



**Figure 1** – Comparative data of the evaluation of the language policy of the population, 2021-2023

Results showed that statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) are observed only in the cross-section of nationalities, while no statistically significant differences are observed in the cross-section of other characteristics. Thus, in the Kazakh society two positions prevail independently of gender, age groups, level of education, material status, social-professional status, family status and other criteria: a large part of the population, almost equally (on average about 38%) share the opinion that language policy is balanced, active and promotes inter-ethnic harmony, no less a significant part of Kazakhs believe that policy and its implementation diverge, that is, everything is said correctly, But on the ground, it's different.

As already noted, the analysis of the correlation tables determined statistically significant differences in the breakdown of nationalities: among citizens of Kazakh nationality more often than others, opinions are spread «balanced policy, active and promotes inter-ethnic harmony» (41%) and «dissatisfied with the language policy» (11%); at the same time, less than among other ethnic groups,

there is a widespread opinion «support of Kazakh language and displacement of other languages» (11%). Among citizens of Russian nationality, there is an intermediate distribution of opinions, a middle position between the opinions of citizens of Kazakh nationality and the opinions of citizens of other nationalities. The most diametrically opposed positions of opinion are observed between citizens of Kazakh nationality and citizens of other nationalities. Thus among citizens of the category «other nationalities», which includes representatives of many nationalities of Kazakhstan, less than among Kazakhs and Russians, opinions «balanced policy, active and promotes inter-ethnic harmony» are widespread (30%) and «dissatisfied with the language policy» (3%); at the same time, in comparison with other groups, the prevailing opinion is «about greater support for the Kazakh language and the removal of other languages» (23%). Unlike the Kazakh and Russian nationalities, representatives of other ethnic groups are more inclined to believe that «the policy is correct, but in fact different» (43%) (Table 1).

**Table 1** – Analysis of the evaluation of language policy in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, n=4000

Subject of study		The language policy is full-fledged, effective and contributes to international stability	The policy is correct, but in practice it is different	Dissatisfied with the language policy	Support of Kazakh language and displacement of other languages	The interests of Kazakh language are ignored in favor of stability
gender $p>0.05$	male	38%	36%	8%	15%	3%
	female	38%	35%	9%	15%	3%
age groups $p>0.05$	18-29 years	38%	34%	9%	16%	3%
	30-45 years	38%	35%	9%	15%	3%
	46-60 years	39%	36%	9%	13%	3%
	61 years and over	35%	42%	6%	15%	2%
nationality $p<0.05$	Kazakhs	41%	34%	11%	11%	3%
	Russian	33%	37%	7%	21%	2%
	other nationalities	30%	43%	3%	23%	1%
education level $p>0.05$	average	41%	34%	8%	14%	3%
	vocational and technical education	36%	36%	9%	16%	3%
	Higher education	37%	37%	9%	14%	3%
Household wealth $p>0.05$	above average	42%	35%	9%	11%	3%
	average	38%	34%	9%	16%	3%
	below average	37%	37%	9%	14%	3%
	difficult	42%	36%	4%	16%	2%

## Conclusion

Language policy in Kazakhstan is regulated by a number of regulatory documents that are subject to the basic law of the republic, the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Language Policy,” the program for the implementation of the language policy (for 2023-2029). In accordance with the law, the Kazakh language as the state language of Kazakhstan is currently approved and implemented, but along with the state Russian language is formed as a language of interethnic communication. This means that along with the state language in Kazakhstan, the status of the Russian language exists and equally operates. The scope of application of languages, starting with the conduct of state office work, is reflected in the media, in all areas of everyday life of society. This process can be seen as a successful manifestation of the implementation of bilingual policies in the state. Since independence, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the government of Kazakhstan has actively supported the development of the Kazakh language by conducting a number of activities to disseminate

and strengthen it. This is expressed in the distribution of schools with Kazakh language instruction, in the development of Kazakh language course for foreign students, teaching all citizens Kazakh language and other measures.

However, there is some criticism of the language policy of Kazakhstan, related to insufficient use of the Kazakh language in some areas of public life, as well as unequal access to education and service in Kazakh for all citizens of the country. The assessment of language policy in Kazakhstan by the population can be different, depending on the opinion and needs of different social groups. Some citizens may be positive about language policy as it helps to preserve cultural diversity and strengthen national identity. They can support the government’s efforts to promote the state language – Kazakh, as well as the development of official language policy. At the same time, other residents of Kazakhstan may criticize the language policy for insufficient attention to the development and support of other languages of citizens inhabiting a multinational country, they may point out deficiencies in minority language

education and access to information in their mother tongue.

The indicated criticism is confirmed by the results of a sociological survey, so among citizens of category «other nationalities», which include representatives of many nationalities of Kazakhstan, less than among Kazakhs and Russians, opinions are widespread «Balanced, active and conducive to inter-national harmony» (30%). Despite the small number of respondents dissatisfied with the language policy (3%), among the “other ethnic groups” the opinion is more widespread (23%) about “supporting the Kazakh language and rejecting other languages” than among Kazakhs and Russian nationalities. At the same time, unlike the respondents of the Kazakh and Russian nationalities, representatives of other ethnic groups are of the opinion that “the policy is correct, but in fact different” (43%).

Thus, language policy in Kazakhstan continues to be an important topic of discussion and requires further efforts to ensure equality of languages and cultures of all peoples of the country. In conclusion, the study of the implementation of language policy requires further study, taking into account the views of significant groups of the population, their gender character, age characteristics, national character, any priorities. In this regard, the state must constantly take into account the opinion of society when developing and implementing language policy. This will contribute to the further development of the state language in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the implementation of a rational language policy that guarantees the favorable coexistence of ethnic groups in the country while preserving their native languages and their own culture.

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