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LANGUAGE CHOICE AND LANGUAGE PREFERENCES IN PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE (BASED ON THE TEXTS OF JOB ADVERTISEMENTS)

The subject of this article is language practice in the context of Kazakhstan's labor market. The article provides a brief overview of the language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan having a direct impact on language practice and the process of commodification of the Kazakh language in general. The article presents an analysis of job advertisements to identify the demand for the language in the labor market. It should be noted that the results of the study reflect the current situation (2023 is the period of the experiment). The results were obtained using content analysis and discourse analysis. The experiment led to the conclusion that the Kazakh language has become a valuable skill in the labor market, but at the same time, the greatest part of written business communication is carried out in Russian. The authors see the prospect of research in a longitudinal study of the process of commodification of the Kazakh language in the aspect of marketing linguistics, as well as research into the specific characteristics of the text of advertisements from the perspective of sociolinguistics, linguistic pragmatics, text linguistics, and discourse theory.

Key words: language policy, discourse, language skill, the Kazakh language commodification, language choice.

MAIN PROVISIONS

Professional discourse is widely discussed and highly debatable in terms of languages, ethics, accessibility, power dynamics, etc. We adhere to the opinion of such researchers as Britt-Louise Gunnarsson or Kenneth Kong and L.S.Beilinson that professional discourse is communication that happens between people with some professional training background to make things done. If professional discourse is defined as a text in a socio-pragmatic context it means that any job advertisement, as a form of professional discourse, will have the same features as well. Indeed, job advertisements are designed to catch the attention of specific professionals and make them apply, as well as social context could be easily understood by used vocabulary (such as values of employer, social orientation (work for women or students) or position grade and consequently pay range). In our research we used job advertisements as a tool to measure efficiency of governmental language policy in a private sector. With the literature review on the topic, in our view, works of Suleymenova E.D, Madiyeva G.B, Altynbekova O.B, and Ibrayeva Zh.K are the most influential ones in the field.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered what type of privilege language proficiency could create? This issue is highly discussed mainly in the domain of the English language commodification given the globalization context in general and some economic issues in particular [1], but if such privilege could be applied to the local context as well? Currently, the world is experiencing global transformations in the labor market. Kazakhstani society, in the new reality, is faced with new challenges and new needs, an important one of which is the development of human capital. Therefore, it is relevant to turn to the analysis of language processes and the implementation of language policy in the Kazakh labor market. The relevance is due to a number of factors: firstly, changes in the language planning of the Republic of Kazakhstan that have occurred in recent years require a quantitative and qualitative analysis of language processes and language preferences in leading areas of business and economics; secondly, the observed imbalance of supply and demand in the labor market allows us to talk about the necessary foresight in the field of education, training and retraining of personnel in the conditions of observed competition; thirdly, the development of digital technologies has entailed changes in the requirements for key skills, among which knowledge of languages takes an important place.

If we focus on Kazakhstan's language policy in general and paragraph 24 point 1 of Law on Consumer Protection in particular, which obliges companies to provide information on a product in Kazakh if a customer asks to, then the following questions may arise: if this law creates cases of language-sensitive recruitment [2] or do companies comply with this obligation in terms of Kazakh languages proficiency?

The article presents an analysis of job advertisements by focusing on pre-employment key skills. In our opinion, this might shed light on the actual language practices in the business field domain. Having received this information, we could further analyze it on the subject of compliance with the government's language policy as well as see market demand for a specific language skill. Thus, revealing the type of relations between actual language practice – desired language practice – and market demand for a language proficiency is the main objective of the article.

Further this article deals with an overview of regulatory documents of Republic of Kazakhstan, an analysis of job advertisements, review of used methods and tools. The discussion part of the article will explain revealed tendencies from data and in the conclusion part, findings will be summed up and compared with our vision of the situation. Authors will also propose some recommendations that, in their opinion, will be useful as for employees so for employers related to language management as well as enlighten some aspects of related matters for further elaboration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the process of work, based on the goals and objectives of the study, the following methods were used: the synthesis method, descriptive method, content analysis (keywords and clue words identification). The data on "position title" was also collected to analyze if a specific language skill indicated within the titles. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis was applied to check compliance with the agreed language standards and to reveal current social context. Key words search was used to get a specific list of results and all that results were used for analysis. To identify the availability of a specific language skill in the text a document-term matrix was used.

As the material and sources of the study were used data was collected from the hh.kz (headhunter.kz) site. Headhunter is a Russian-based company dealing with internet recruitment officially opened in Kazakhstan in 2006. The review of sources showed that, regardless of the availability of different job-seeking sites in Kazakhstan such as enbek.kz, qyzmet.kz,jobs.kz, rabota.kz and others the most used site for job seekers is hh.kz. According to a 2019 report by SimilarWeb, hh.kz had a traffic share of 94.9% among job-seeking websites in Kazakhstan which means that 94.9% of all people searching for a job online, use a hh.kz platform. And according to today's dynamic information hh.kz is still ranked first. The site interface is available in Kazakh since 2014 [3], [4].

It is worth noting that there is also Enbek.kz - an official government-owned labor exchange website dealing with unemployment in a broader social-economic context. For example, if you search for a "shepherd": hh.kz search results equals 0 and Enbek.kz search results provide "28 open vacancies for 57 working places". All postings are differentiated based on employment promotion measures: employed regularly or governmentally subsidized (youth employment, first placement, public works). National projects (such as Entrepreneurship Development, Educated Nation, Healthy Nation, Regional Development Program, etc.) employment needs also could be analyzed through postings at enbek.kz using dedicated filters. Additionally, job postings are marked based on specific criteria: jobs for released from prison, for people with disabilities, with provision of accommodation, for youth. Postings at Enbek.kz are obligatory for companies based on local governmental decision [5]. It is also important to note that there is a specific place for the "language proficiency" filter at enbek.kz and no such filter at hh.kz. We believe it reflects a wider concept of language management in Kazakhstan.

Data collection was performed with Chrome Web Scraper extension to minimize errors caused by human factors. Input value was defined as "sales manager". It was decided to choose "sales manager" position for analysis due to the following reasons: 1) main skill to perform this job is being able to successfully communicate with customers; 2) having communication skill in the position of hard skill means that this criterion won't be neglected or sacrificed in favor or other valuable skill.

It is assumed that in case language is a key factor it should be indicated in the key skills section, otherwise it should be considered as not essential. It should be noted that postings could be done without mentioning key skills if the recruiting manager did not consider doing so. But omitting the key skills field affects the search result potential of a job posting so it could be considered as a "human error" given that the main objective of any job posting is to attract suitable candidates. This error could be potentially mitigated with analysis of search results of description section. Collected data cleaned up and analyzed using Tableau Public and represented in graphs using Numbers application.

RESULTS

Having articulated language choice and language preferences problem in the discussion section of this article, we hypothesize that real language practices as well as market demand for a language as a skill could be found analyzing job advertisements. We will check if the Kazakh language is a must-have employment criterion and what kind of language choices are made at workplaces. It was

correctly noted that "how one speaks and writes is one basis for deciding one's worth as a scholar, an employee or a potential marriage partner" [6, 102].

Results were derived from 1840 collected job advertisements and have shown the following to be true. First, the Kazakh language proves to be a valuable asset in the job market. At every third interview, potential candidates will be asked to demonstrate proficiency in the Kazakh language.

Second, the Kazakh language as such does not create language-sensitive recruitment practices in the private sector for sales manager positions but adds a comparative advantage to potential candidates. Third, not all employers can comply with paragraph 24 point 1 of the Law on Consumer Protection in terms of providing information in the Kazakh language. This might be because there is no demand for this service or there are already employed people responsible for the task.

Before starting the analysis of collected data set following should be considered:

- 1. Hh.kz site is dynamic, search results may vary each time search is performed.
- 2. Archived postings are no longer available for users in open access but might be reached via link.
- 3. Even though interface language could be changed there is no control over input value i.e. Availability of kazakh interface does not guarantee text in kazakh.
 - 4. Key skills field is technically available for every employer to be filled in. Search was configured as indicated in table 2.

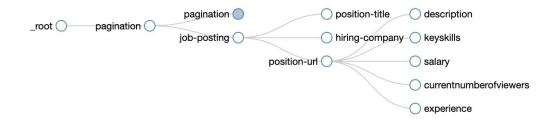
Table 2 – Search configuration.

Vacancy search	https://hh.kz/search/vacancy/adv	Required	Doesn't matter
·	anced?hhtmFrom=main	experience	
Keywords	Sales manager	Sort by	relevance
Search only	In vacancy name	Display	
			For all time
Region	Almaty	Show in page	100 openings
Starting page as a	https://hh.kz/search/vacancy?no_magic=true&L_save_area=true&text=sale		
result of search	s+manager&search_field=name&excluded_text=&area=160&salary=&curr		
request	ency_code=KZT&experience=doesNotMatterℴ_by=relevance&search		
	_period=0&items_on_page=100&page=0		

Search was done on August 31, 2023. Search result equals to 1841 job postings. Even though keyword was provided in English search result shows English, Russian and Kazakh postings as site has integrated synonyms function, which performs transliteration, translation of some terms and titles, and pairing positions with identical meaning.

We collected data using Chrome Web Scraper extension using following sitemap (Figure 1):

Figure 1. Sitemap for sales manager position scraping



Data was cleaned and analyzed using Tableau Public. To identify whether description or key skills section contains specific language we created calculated field using formula:

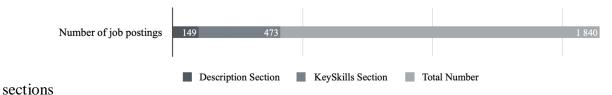
IF CONTAINS([Description], "specific language in Russian") OR CONTAINS([Description], "specific language in English") OR CONTAINS([Description], "specific language in Kazakh") THEN 1 ELSE 0 END.

Specific language inputs: 'Russian', 'Kazakh', 'English', 'русский', 'казахский', 'английский', 'орыс', 'қазақ', 'ағылшын'. Potential errors of this approach might be when analyzing Description section as targeted words could be used in different context then we expect it to be used.

From defined data set we got following data:

- 1. We collected 1840 job postings. 351 out of them has no skills identified in Key skills Section, and 82 postings has no data in description field due to usage of image or template instead of text. 622 job postings have language skill mentioned in Description or Key skills sections. It means that every third job postings have a language skill in pre-employment conditions (Figure 1).
- 2. Language criterion is often found in the Key skills section rather than in Description: 473 vs. 149. This supports our assumption regarding common approach to a language as a skill (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of job postings based on language criterion in Key skills or Description

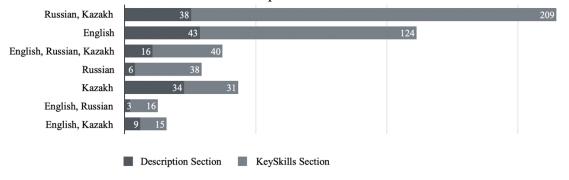


3. From Language Scoring information you can see that in Description is usually only one language is identified – mostly English or Kazakh; in Key skills section two languages are identified more often – Russian and Kazakh. Right after Kazakh and Russian we have request for English language as in description so in Key skills section. We can also notice that there is a demand for employees knowing three languages at the same time (Figure 3-4).

Figure 3. Number of job postings based on number of languages (Language Score criterion) indicated in Key skills and Description sections



Figure 4. Number of job postings based on language and its combinations from Key skills and Description sections



4. We define the quality of job postings regarding language criterion as the ratio between professional discourse characteristic of being clear and characteristic of job posting of being short and concise. Therefore, quality means a lack of ambiguity caused by duplicative data, lack of duplicative data. However, we admit that duplicative data might serve as a reinforcing tool but most probably in different types of discourse. Thus, almost 80% of job postings having good quality of publication (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Job postings' quality

Number of job postings

70

482

622

- 5. If we compare Russian, Kazakh, and English languages mentioned in the Key skills and Description field we get the following information (Figure 6):
- a) Russian and Kazakh languages are more often defined in the Key skills section compared to English. This supports our assumption that speaking [in terms of proper speaking Russian and Kazakh language] is the Key Skills for a sales manager;
- b) In the Description section Kazakh language is more often mentioned compared to English and Russian. This shows the growing demand for the Kazakh language as a "nice to have" or "additional" criterion;
- c) Overall Kazakh language is more often indicated as a language skill compared to Russian and English, even though the difference is 7% and 31% respectively. This might also show a high level of knowledge of English or low demand. In our case, we believe that second is true as the search was restricted to the Almaty area;
- d) Kazakh and Russian languages are less duplicative, so the data quality level is equal to 90% and 92% respectively.

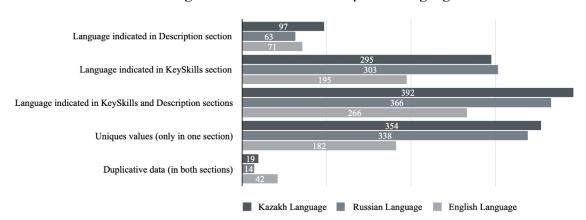


Figure 6. Review based on specific language

We also expected language skill to be indicated in the title of a job posting. In this case, language skill is the main condition for employment and cannot be neglected. Overall, from the mentioned data set, we found 6 postings with the Kazakh language, 5 postings with Chinese, 2 postings with the English language, 1 posting with Russian, English and Kazakh, and 1 posting with Kazakh, English and Chinese. Other languages found are: Korean, Turkish, Uzbek, Ukrainian and German – each by 1 posting. This data also adds to our vision that employers tend to indicate skills in key skills section while working with hh.kz.

To detect language of advertisements we also used calculated field:

• the English language formula was as follows:

IF CONTAINS([Description], "responsibilities") OR CONTAINS([Description], "requirements") OR CONTAINS([Description], "compensations") OR

CONTAINS([Description],"benefits") OR CONTAINS([Description],"apply") THEN 1 ELSE 0 END

• the Kazakh language formula was as follows:

CONTAINS([Description],"\u03c4") CONTAINS([Description]," OR γ") OR CONTAINS([Description], OR CONTAINS([Description]," OR К ") CONTAINS([Description]," ") CONTAINS([Description]," Н OR OR CONTAINS([Description]," a ") OR CONTAINS([Description]," i") THEN 1 ELSE 0 END

As a result, we got numbers: Kazakh language 9 postings, English language 17 postings. Remaining ads are in Russian (more than 1800). This means that to be able to apply for a position, applicants must have reading and comprehension ability in Russian. Another interesting observation is that when keywords in hh.kz are defined as "сату маманы" we got only 9 postings in Kazakh and that is all. It means that the synonyms function available at the site works only in directions from Russian into English and Kazakh, but not vice versa.

Our analysis should be considered as intermediate given that situation is dynamic and highly influenced by different socio-economic factors and "language management, language choices and linguistic issues are never autonomous but the response to "social, political, economic, religious, ideological, emotional context in which human life goes" [7] but still "language [...] is not a reflection of the social order, but is part of what makes it happen" [6, 102]. In today's reality we could mention such issues as changing perception of the Russian language in society, local national sentiments, transfer of international companies from neighboring countries, etc. Additionally, we would like to mention that results of our analysis apply solely to one of the parts of written business communication, which is well-established communication system resistant to changes. Daily oral communication challenges linguistic research due to its mode and fast-changing character.

DISCUSSION

Representing one of the types of professional discourse, business discourse takes various forms and job advertisements are one of such forms. Job advertisements, in turn, also have different forms and are realized using different communication channels. In our research, we focus on job advertisements posted on job-seeking sites. Postings are done by the hiring company or by 3rd party acting on behalf of the hiring company, providing recruiting services. Postings serve as a source of different linguistic data. For instance, the analysis could be performed on gender questions [8, 9], from the structural perspective or lexical outlook [10] to reveal the cultures and values of hiring companies [11], to reveal trends in the job market regarding skills in demand, and, in our case, to show the actual language practices at the market that could provide a job for a candidate.

If political discourse in Kazakhstan is mainly characterized as bilingual [12, 15], then based on the data we collected studying job advertisements we could define business discourse as multilingual. At some point, such a situation reflects the language policy pursued by the government. The complexity of the language policy is widely discussed in the works of such scholars as Suleymenova E.D., Shaimerdenova N.Zh., Smagulova Zh.S., Altynbekova O.B., Akberdi M.I., Ibrayeva Zh.K. and others. It has been emphasized many times that language policy from the beginning had to manage the consequences of Soviet russification policy considering the demographic heterogeneity of nations living in Kazakhstan and still be adaptive to dynamic situations within the growing state. Even though Kazakhstan has more than 100 nations with their own languages, two main languages are conquering for dominance on the agenda: Russian versus Kazakh [13, 27].

According to Suleymenova E.D. Kazakh language is gaining a more stable and leading position compared to Russian given changes in ethical structure (a natural growth of Kazakh speaking population) as well as migration (programs on repatriation of Kazakh people from abroad) and minority issues (languages of the minority have least chances to survive due to isolation from the center of origin as well as a number of people speaking that language is dramatically low) [13]. Altynbekova O.B. by analyzing demographic data and migration tendencies also highlights the strengthening position of Kazakh language and marks Russian language as "widely functioning

means of interethnic interaction" [14, 41]. In the summary of the population census for 2021 vs. the report for 2009, we can also observe the continuation of the trend: total population growth is mainly due to the growth of Kazakh ethnicity and the decline of Russian ethnicity (Table 1) [15, 11].

Table 1 - Demographic data from population census report 2021

Title	2009 year	2021 year	Trend
Total population	16 009 597	19 186 015	+ 3 176 418
Kazakh ethnicity	10 096 763	13 497 891	+ 3 401 128
Russian ethnicity	3 793 764	2 981 946	- 811 818

There is an occurring "reversing language shift" mentioned by Suleymenova E.D. referring to changes in language preferences from Russian to Kazakh. She also correctly points out that "for such preferences to become nationwide reality language behavior has to change in all areas of communication, especially in government and business" [16; 37]. It is important to note that the business domain represents a weak link of language policy. The language question in the business domain was also mentioned in the governmental program on the realization of language policy for 2020 - 2025 with one of the tasks (point 2.4) related "to increase the number of Kazakh-language publications in the field of business, psychology, personal development as well as streamlining the use of terms in the Kazakh language in the fields of finance, economics and business" [17]. It is also worth noting that in point 3.4 of mentioned program indicted that 93% of document flow at governmental bodies is conducted in the Kazakh language.

Proximity of language question to the business domain also could be seen through paragraph 24 p.1 of Law on Consumer Protection which states that the seller (manufacturer, performer) is obliged "to provide information about the product (work, service), as well as about the seller (manufacturer, performer) in the Kazakh and Russian languages, under the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan" [18].

As we can see tools supporting the usage of the Kazakh language in the business domain are relatively sufficient. But it is still debatable what are the real language practices even though according to the last statistics report 76,5% of the urban population know the Kazakh language and only 43,3% of it use it daily, in case of the rural population 85,5% know Kazakh language and 58,6% out of it use it daily [15; 30]. It is debatable because even though daily communication might be, at some point, part of business communication, but still business communication significantly differs from daily communication.

Another interesting information to mention is that 63,6% of entrepreneurs prefer mass media to be published only in Kazakh language and 20,5% prefer Russian and Kazakh languages [14; 114]. Can we think based on these statistics that entrepreneurs are mostly Kazakh speakers and they potentially push the usage of Kazakh in their businesses? Not really, because being an entrepreneur means serving people a good service in the language a customer prefers to use.

It is also important to note that language in the business domain has a different role than in daily life, specifically, language is considered as a skill rather than a part of an identity [10; 103]. When we mention skill, we mean complex skill of communication – clear, concise, complete, courteously using proper language, verbal and non-verbal, written and oral aspects of a language.

CONCLUSION

Summing up on conducted research we would like to draw the following conclusions and recommendations. Firstly, we encourage potential candidates to have a valid KAZTEST certificate to increase chances to be employed as well as to be able to apply to a greater number of open vacancies.

Second, it is important to develop a professional test measuring knowledge of the Kazakh language in the business domain following the example of TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication).

And lastly, it is very challenging analyzing the commodification of the Kazakh language solely based on the job postings due to the multitude of variables at play. These variables include detailed job descriptions, employee types, position grading, candidates' prior experience, and more. A notable limitation in this discussion pertains to the absence of legal requirements mandating companies to disclose salary data for specific roles. The introduction of a pay transparency policy, akin to those implemented in the European Union or the United States, would significantly facilitate the assessment of the impact of the Kazakh language on earnings. Findings might create an additional motivational point for learning and using the Kazakh language.

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Кәсіби дискурстағы тілді таңдау және тілдік қалау (бос жұмыс орындары туралы хабарландырулар мәтіндері негізінде)

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Берілген мақаланың зерттеу нысаны қазақстандық еңбек нарығы аясындағы тілдік практика мәселесі болып табылады. Мақалада тілдік практика мен жалпы қазақ тілін коммерциализациялау үдерісіне тікелей әсер етіп отырған Қазақстан Республикасының тілдік саясатына қысқаша шолу ұсынылған. Еңбек нарығындағы тілдің сұранысқа ие болу дәрежесін анықтау мақсатында жұмысқа қабылдау туралы хабарландыруларға талдау жүргізілді. Зерттеу нәтижелері ағымдағы жағдайды ғана (2023 жылы — іс-тәжірибені жүргізу кезеңі) көрсететінін атап өткен жөн. Нәтижелер контент-талдау мен дискурсивті талдау көмегімен алынды. Жүргізілген іс-тәжірибе еңбек нарығында қазақ тілінің құнды дағдыға айналғаны, сонымен қатар жазбаша іскерлік қарым-қатынас орыс тілінде жүргізілетіні туралы қорытынды жасауға мүмкіндік берді. Мақала авторлары зерттеу келешегі ретінде маркетингтік лингвистика аспектісінде қазақ тілін коммерциализациялау үдерісін лонгитюдті зерттеуді, сонымен қатар әлеуметтік лингвистика, лингвопрагматика, мәтін лингвистикасы, дискурс теориясы шеңберінде хабарландырулар мәтіндерінің спецификалық сипаттамаларын талдауды қарастырады.

Кілт сөздер: тілдік саясат, дискурс, тілдік дағды, қазақ тілінің коммодификациясы, тілді таңдау.

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Выбор языка и языковые предпочтения в профессиональном дискурсе (на основе текстов объявлений вакансий)

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Предметом рассмотрения данной статьи является языковая практика в контексте казахстанского рынка труда. В статье представлен краткий обзор языковой политики Республики Казахстан как прямое влияние на языковую практику и процесс коммерциализации казахского языка в целом. В статье осуществлен анализ объявлений о приеме на работу с целью выявления востребованности языка на рынке труда. Отметим, что результаты исследования отражают текущую ситуацию (2023 год — период проведения эксперимента). Результаты получены с помощью контент-анализа и дискурсивного анализа. Проведенный эксперимент позволил сделать вывод о том, что казахский язык стал ценным навыком на рынке труда, но вместе с тем письменное деловое общение осуществляется на русском языке. Авторы видят перспективу исследования в лонгитюдном исследовании процесса коммерциализации казахского языка в аспекте маркетинговой лингвистики, а также исследования специфических характеристик текста объявлений в ракурсе социолингвистики, лингвопрагматики, лингвистики текста, теории дискурса.

Ключевые слова: языковая политика, дискурс, языковой навык, коммодификаця казахского языка, выбор языка.

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