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Revival of Russian Language in Central Asian Republics in the Twenty First (21st) Century

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Abstract

Russian language went into a decline during the 1990s when Central Asian Republics (CARs) simultaneously embarked on the process of nation and state building along with economic transition. The CARs desired to diversify their political and economic relations and to lessen their dependence on Russian Federation during their early transition period. Due to its own economic and political problems associated with its transition, Russia could not pay full attention to its former Soviet states during the immediate post-Soviet period. However, due to the Tsarist and particularly Soviet legacies, the economic connectivity and interdependence of former Soviet states on Russian Federation proved long lasting. The revival of Russian language in former Soviet Central Asian Republics is mainly due to the theory of Economics of Language which explores mutual effects of language and economic variables. It says that fluency and command over a dominant language i.e., a language of science and technology and trade provides more dividends. The CARs are still heavily dependent on trade and remittances of their nationals working in Russia. A large number of workers from the countries of Central Asia work in the Russian Federation. Their remittances contribute immensely to the Gross Domestic Product (GDPs) of these countries. The CARs re-started promoting Russian language in their countries due to a significant role of this language in their economies and economic relations with Russia. Since 2000, the Russian economic revival has naturally strengthened its political and economic role in the former

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Soviet space which also includes Central Asia. Consequently, the Russian language also received fresh emphasis.

Keywords: Russia, Central Asian Republics, Revival, Russian Language, Economics, Language Policy

Introduction

It is evident from studies that economic efficiency of individuals increases with fluency in a dominant language. The economics of language explores the mutual effect of language and economic variables. There are three lines of inquiry in this definition; "firstly, how do linguistic variables affect economic variables. Secondly, how do economic variables affect linguistic variables, and third, how do economic processes affect linguistic processes".[1] This article aims to establish a link between Russian language on the one hand, and economic and political relations of Central Asian Republics (CARs) with Russia on the other. Before the disintegration of the USSR, Russian was the official language of the former Soviet Union. After the collapse of USSR in 1991, national languages were focused to consolidate nationhood while Russian language lost its official status and power in some of these states, thus leaving English as the only global language; a language of science, business and technology. The Russian language was quickly replaced by indigenous languages in the former Soviet republics as a result of nation building process. The post-Soviet Republics started integrating their economies in global market due to market reforms. The facilitation of English language was further facilitated in these countries as a result of the developments in economic sphere and integration with the global market.[2]

After 1991, under President Boris Yeltsin, Russian economy and political influence gradually declined in the region as his government had no proper economic and political policies to solve the principal issues of Russian economy and abandoned former Soviet states.[3] The economic and political

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1 Francois Grin, "Economic Considerations in Language Policy" in *Blackwell: An Introduction in Language Policy* (Oxford, 2006), 77-94. Visit at https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/authors/view/5563 (accessed 29 May 2022).

2 Wumaier Yilamu, *Neoliberalism and Post-Soviet Transition*, 1st ed. (E-book, Palgrave, 2018).

3 C. Huygen, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Boris Yeltsin and the Failure of Shock Therapy", *Constellations* 3, No.1 (2012).

transitions in Russia further exacerbated economic issues in the Russian Federation. During the 1990s, the CARs were not paying attention to their relations with Russia as the latter was economically and politically weakened. After the resignation of Boris Yeltsin in 1999, Vladimir Putin, the then Prime Minister of Russia under Boris Yeltsin, assumed office as the acting President of Russia. He became the President of Russia on 7 May 2000. Under Putin, the footprint of Russia re-emerged in the region with bold effects on the entire economic and political atmosphere. The value of Russian economy increased from US$210 billion in 1999 to a peak of US$1.8 trillion in 2008.[4] Since 2000, the CARs turned back to the Russian Federation for strengthening economic and political ties.[5] As millions of Central Asian migrants reached Russia for work, the CARs deemed it economically advantageous to promote the Russian language. The aim wasto build a favourable constituency for Russia within their societies.

This paper statistically establishes a link between the revival of Russian as preferred language in the CARs and their economic development in the wake of the economic and political resurgence of the Russian Federation since 2000.

After the disintegration, Russian language usage was almost eliminated in many former Soviet Union (FSU) states including the CARs but a decade later it started to revive again in these states due to many reasons. Various economic and political issues that arose with Russian language decline and revival in the CARs are being discussed. It provides basis for discussing the economic implications of Russian language's education policy debate in CARs.

The economy of a country is measured through various determinants; however, the role of Russian language is focused here in job market, human capital, remittances, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and international trade of the CARs where we can trace a trend towards the

[4] Ben Aris and Ivan Tkachev, "Long Read: 20 Years of Russia's Economy under Putin", *The Moscow Times*. Visit at https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/08/19/long-read-russias-economy-under-putin-in-numbers-a66924 (accessed 29 May 2022)

[5] Irena Benešováa and Lubos Smutka, "The Post-Soviet Countries – Development and Structure of Economy: Is there any Potential for Future Regional Integration?", *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 220, (May 2016): 30 - 39. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.05.466 (accessed 29 May 2022).

revival of Russian language. The most common foreign language in the CARs is still Russian as majority people speak Russian proficiently in these countries.[6] Census data of these countries here is provided by the 2004 report of the "Russian Center of Demographics and Human Ecology (CDHE)".[7] 60% in Uzbekistan, 66% in Kazakhstan and 70% in Kyrgyzstan show competence in Russian according to the CDHE report in 2004. FDI and human capital both contribute to economic growth of the host country. Employment also affects economic growth and development of a country. Increased earnings of an employee give rise to consumer spending. From this spending other businesses take advantage and increase their consumer sales. It results in healthier local economy.[8] Russian language proficiency was a channel for job opportunities during the Soviet era in the member states of Soviet Union and even after three decades of transition, this language remains economically valuable. In 2008-2010, the probability of getting employment through Russian language was increased in the CARs.[9]

Russian language trends and economies

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the CARs adopted different strategies with regards to the Russian language. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan gave it an official status along with the titular language as state, whereas Turkmenistan and Tajikistan proclaimed Russian as the language of interethnic communication. As far as Uzbekistan is concerned, it policies largely inclined towards de-russification. In the immediate post-Soviet period, the Russian language fell victim to discrimination and eradication. A large number of Russian language speakers also left the CARs in this first decade. Economically, these newly independent states turned vulnerable due to the transition from one economic system to another. In the second decade of independence, some of these states aimed to enhance their economic relations with Russia when Russia was getting economically

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[6] A. Mavisakalyan, "Returns to Language Skills in Transition Economies", IZA World of Labor (2017), visit at https://wol.iza.org/articles/returns-to-language-skills-in-transition-economies (accessed 29 May 2022).

[7] A. Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries", *Russian Linguistics*, 32, No.1, (2008): 59–80. https://doi.org/ 10.1007/s11185-007-9020-1 (accessed 29 May 2022).

[8] Meskerem Demissie, FDI, Human Capital and Economic Growth: A Panel Data Analysis of Developing Countries. http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:902661 /FULLTEXT02 (accessed 29 May 2022)

[9] Alan Duncan and Astghik Mavisakalyn, "Russian Language Skills and Employment in the Former Soviet Union", *Economics of Transition*, (2015): 625-656. Visit https://ssrn.com/abstract=2612253 (accessed 29 May 2022).

stronger under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. These states started promoting the Russian language in their states. A strong Soviet legacy as well as economic well-being dictated this decision. This is proved by comparative analysis of language policies and planning (LPP) of these states and their economic and political relations with the Russian Federation in three decades after the independence.

A comparison of the LPP and economic relations of the CARs as a whole with Russia shows that the Russian language lost its privileged position in the early stage of independence in all five CARs. Similarly, the turnover of goods between Russia and the Central Asian countries continuously declined during the 1990s. In the year 2000, trade relations between Russia and Central Asian countries stagnated. These relations began to intensify in 2003 and goods turnover started to grow as depicted in **Figure 1**.

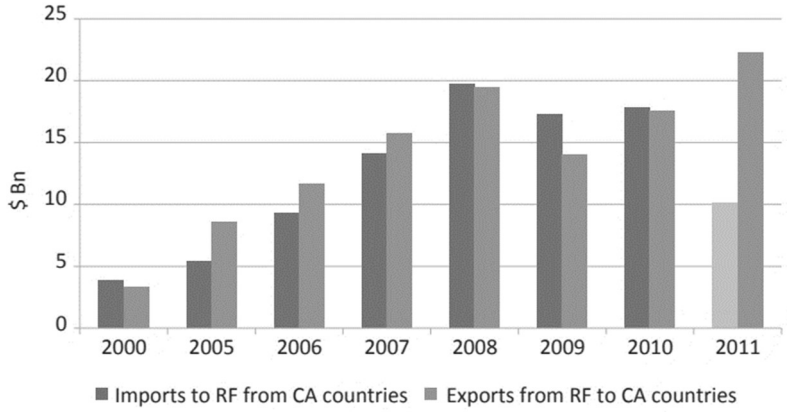


Figure 1: Trade trends amongst Russia and CARs (2000-2011)

In second decade of independence, the Russian language experienced a revival in these countries that earlier had been focusing on relations with other countries and other languages. A political rapprochement among Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the one hand, and with Russia on the other hand promoted trade expansion. The remittances increased quite rapidly from Russia to the CARs in this second decade of independence. They almost doubled between 2006 and 2010. The inflow of Central Asian students to Russia also grew.

Revival of Russian language in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has reformed its language policy and planning after independence. Article 4 of its constitution Uzbek as the only official language.[10] Later in 1995, the Cyrillic alphabet was switched to Latin. This law was followed by forceful efforts in Uzbekistan to eradicate Russian from the public places and minimize TV channels and newspapers operating in the Russian language.[11] Uzbeks had been successful in preserving their language even during the days of the Soviet Union. In mid 1990s, the promotion of the Uzbek language got intensified. Islam Karimov, the former president of Uzbekistan, urged in a speech that "foreign languages should be taught and learned but not to the oblivion of the mother tongue i.e., Uzbek language".[12] It was an anti-Russian period in Uzbekistan that continued even in the early years of the second decade. Russian speakers having a limited proficiency of Uzbek faced a lot of difficulties for getting employment during that era. The 2004 CDHE report shows that 20% population actively spoke Russian, while overall 60% retained competence in this language. The number of the Russian-language schools decreased from 1230 during the Soviet era to 813 in 2000. The number of schools with Russian medium in Uzbekistan further decreased to 150 only in 2004. Uzbekistan, which wanted to become a member of modern market economy challenged by globalization but had a language policy tied to centrist state ideology, is still in charge of its politics and administration. This development having more standardization would definitely affect the non-standardized environments such as the bilingual speech contexts and the minority languages etc. Language policy and planning are deeply involved with the relations of power. [13]

In the first decade of independence, the Uzbek government worked aggressively to project its independence politically, economically, and spiritually. However, simultaneously, a quite different opinion surfaced as a

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[10] Visit Ref World at https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3ae6b60c0.pdf, (accessed 29 May 2022).

[11] A. Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries".

[12] Karimov education policy speech cited in Madina Djuraeva, "Language in Education Policy in Uzbekistan: Formation of Uzbek National Identity", available at https://www.academia.edu/44100112/Language_in_Education_Policy_in_Uzbekistan_Formation_of_Uzbek_National_Identity.

[13] B. Schlyter, "Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and its Neighbors", *Brill*, (December 9, 2011), available at https://brill.com/view/title/17296 (accessed 29 May 2022).

result of these efforts. It is called “Russophilia”. Russia which was a self-imposed center now became a magnet for millions of independent Uzbeks. Malik Abdurazzoqov, a political analyst, states that people of Uzbekistan became more Russophilic because of the failure of Uzbek government to implement any good reform program.[14] That is the reason why people were still getting information in Russian language and mass media including electronic and print remained the main tools in shaping public consciousness. Consequently, Russia's standing in Uzbekistan improved, and Russia's economic as well as political image became more obvious and strongly noticeable after Putin became president. According to Khadjimukhamedov, deputy director of the public opinion center *Ijtimoiy Fikr* based in Tashkent, another important reason behind the improving vision of Russia in Uzbekistan was the security element. The presence of the US elsewhere in Central Asia and other Islamic groups were seen as a threat to the security of the region. Naturally, Russia became a kind of protective neighbor and an ally.

The Uzbek population was satisfied as they got access to the developed world via Russia. Since 2003, Uzbekistan has been experiencing a rapprochement with the Russian Federation. The Uzbek leaders began indicating increasing concerns about the decline in the competence of Russian-language that was depriving citizens of various educational and economic benefits. Many attempts were made in the second decade after independence to address this issue. For example, 300,000 textbooks in Russian-language were donated by the Russian Consulate in Uzbekistan to the schools, while a series of courses were arranged by Omsk University for Uzbek teachers of Russian-language.[15] About 77-81% of urban population still uses the Russian language at work. The reason of Russophilia was not only the inertia of Soviet past. The people of Uzbekistan were themselves getting tired and didn’t see any alternative. They calculated that there were no reforms in Uzbekistan at all and, therefore, it would be beneficial to build a relationship with Russia or the United States of America. A new phenomenon surfaced that an external force can guarantee great changes in people’s lives. Khadjimukhamedov mentions that US, being economically strong, couldn’t guarantee such changes because of geographic distance

[14] Z. Eshanova, Uzbekistan: Russia’s Image on the Rise in Central Asia *(Part 1)*, Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, (April 9, 2008). Available at https://www.rferl.org/a/1101354.html (accessed 29 May 2022).

[15] A. Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries”.

from Central Asia. Russia, which was politically and economically rich, can play the role of big brother easily for Uzbekistan.[16] After the Andijan events in Uzbekistan in May 2005, the political reorientation had long term effects on the language usage in the country—a development that showed sensitivity and liability of the issue. Uzbekistan's tense relations with the US government after Andijan episode led to complete break with the West for many years and a strong rapprochement with Russia. As a result of this political development, the reform work on Uzbek language became slower and hesitant.[17]

Uzbekistan's probable accession to the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has motivated issues about Uzbek LPP and the role of Russian in Uzbek society. Shavkat Mirziyoyev (Uzbek Prime Minister from 2003-2016) became Uzbek President in 2016 who opened up Uzbekistan for relations with many countries particularly Russia. He allowed his country to cooperate with Russia in many ways not seen after independence. In recent years, trade has skyrocketed between the two states and became more cemented through an agreement for building a nuclear power station in the area outside Tashkent. Powerful Uzbek magnets who got wealthy in Russia including Alisher Usmanov and Pattokh Chodiev are also signs of the revival of Uzbek-Russia relations. These oligarchs contributed millions to help Uzbek government in both COVID-19 pandemic and also in development program of ObodQishloq. Being former classmates during the Soviet times, these oligarchs joined forces in 2019 to finance a branch of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGMIO) in Tashkent and have contributed greatly in many commercial ventures.

Economic relations with Russia strengthened in the second and third decade of independence. Another important reason behind the improving vision of Russia in Uzbekistan is the security element. Leaving Georgia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova (GUAM) and joining Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2006 (from which Uzbekistan withdrawn in 1999), was seen as a gesture for improving ties with Russia. Despite a significant decline in Uzbek-Russian economic relations after the collapse of USSR, Uzbekistan's economic development is still, to a large extent, dependent on the Russian economic performance.

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[16] Schlyter, "Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors", *Brill*.
[17] Ibid.

Russia's good macroeconomic performance has positive impact on Uzbek economy.[18] The attitude towards the Russian language and culture are more benevolent on the part of Uzbek authorities and have become more appreciative. Many monolingual Russian and bilingual Uzbek-Russian newspapers and periodicals continue to be published currently and the sensitivity of the 1990s has somewhat dwindled. According to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade, trade between the two countries has gradually increased in last two decades since 2001 and reached this value of US$ 3.91 billion in 2019 as shown in Figure 2. The number of Uzbek migrants is increasing in Russia due to which remittances from Russia are also going up. About 40 % remittances in 2008 were channeled from Russia into Uzbekistan. These remittances accounted for 13% of the total Uzbek GDP in 2008 which increased by 22% in 2010.[19]

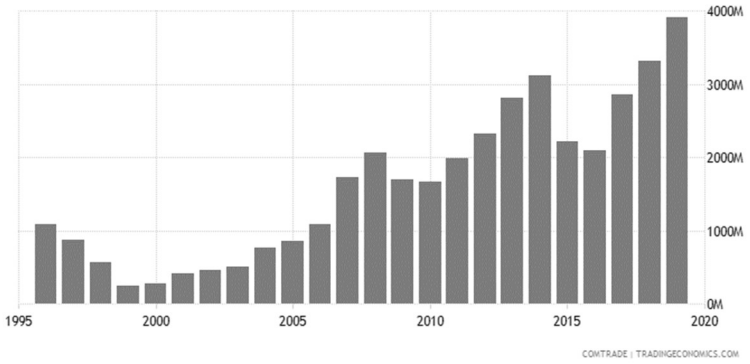


Fig. 2. Russian Exports to Uzbekistan (Last 25 years)

Remittance inflows from Russia to Uzbekistan accounted for 12.11% in 2020, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators.[20] This is also a massive contribution to the Uzbek economy.

[18] K. Jakhongir, "Uzbek-Russian Economic Relations and the Impact of the Russian Economic Performance on Uzbekistan's Growth and Foreign Trade," *IDEAS*, (2004), 11–20. https://ideas.repec.org (accessed 29 May 2022).

[19] I. Sinitsina, "Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries: Trends and Outlook", *IPPA Working Paper*, (2012): 60–75. Available at https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3023190 (accessed 29 May 2022).

[20] Visit at tradingeconomics.com/uzbekistan/remittance-inflows-to-gdp-percent-wb-data.html (accessed 29 May 2022).

A businesswoman, Aziza Umarova, said, "Russian language is doing fine as it is in Uzbekistan; it is taught in schools and universities and is regularly used on television. Main problem is with young people of Uzbekistan who still have not been given Latin script books". Umarova argues that "although Russian was downgraded after independence but the switchover was so inconsistent that number of books available in Latin script was considerably small and Uzbek language got damaged because of the failed attempts to nourish it. Russian language besides its official decline in status has managed to retain a considerable presence".[21] In Uzbekistan, around 11.8 million people (one-third of total population) speak Russian according to the estimates of the Tashkent branch of Rossotrudnichestvo – Russia's state-run Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation agency. Cable television companies in Tashkent and other big cities offer packages having foreign programming largely in Russia. Currently 25,000 Uzbek students are getting education in Russia.[22]

Revival of Russian language in Kazakhstan

Among all CARs, Kazakhstan, having more than 4500 km long border with Russia, has been a special case consisting of 130 nationalities, including 30% Russian minority. During the Soviet era, the Kazakhs were not in the majority and the country was deeply Russified. The Russian language was more prevalent than Kazakh. After gaining independence, the Kazakh state aimed to strengthen the formal power of the titular nation through their language policies and planning. The law introduced mandatory use of Kazakh in the public organizations, education, politics, and media. Dual citizenship was forbidden. The law made it the duty of every citizen to master the Kazakh language but the implementations of these policies were slow because competence in the Kazakh language was limited even among native the people. The struggle to make new ethnic relations gave rise to a process of "Kazakhization". The Kazakhs were advanced as a national group at the expense of other national groups particularly the Russians.[23] Article 7 of the Kazakh Constitution declared Kazakh as the state

[21] "Uzbekistan: A Second Coming for the Russian Language?", *Eurasianet*, 19 June 2019, visit https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-a-second-coming-for-the-russian-language (accessed 29 May 2022).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Renata Matuszkiewicz, "The Language Issue in Kazakhstan – Institutionalizing New Ethnic Relations after Independ- ence", *Economic and Environmental Studies* 10, No.2 (2010): 211–227. Visit at https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/ search/article?articleId=1148016 (accessed 29 May 2022).

(or titular) language. It granted Russian an official status that may be used in state institutions. According to the bilingual policy, the Kazakh president used to address his public traditionally in both Kazakh and the Russian languages.[24] The main purpose of these education reforms in Kazakhstan was the "Kazakhization" instead of de-russification. The 1999 census shows that Kazakhs crossed the 50% mark as a portion of the total population. During that period, the Russian population shrank due to extreme emigration. More than one million Russians left Kazakhstan during the first decade, while, on the whole, 1 million 800 thousand people migrated from Kazakhstan in the same period.

Matuszkiewicz argues that Kazakh language was made compulsory in all institutions and media etc. after independence. The law demanded the exclusive use of the Kazakh language but no sanctions were imposed to accomplish the change. In fact, Russian was still extensively used on governmental level. As a result, 56% people by 2004 got education in Kazakh-language schools. The number of these schools was higher in the rural areas than urban. Among ethnic Kazakhs, 80% received education in Kazakh, while 20% in Russian in the first decade after independence. The number of mixed schools offering education in both languages increased from 242 (in 1988) to 723 (in 2004). Russian was still dominant in higher education in the second decade of independence and onwards. The CDHE report of 2004 indicates that Russian was actively used by 66% of the total population while 81% had competence in it. Among the students, 32% studied in Kazakh (including 21.9% in the technical subjects), because textbooks in Kazakh were not widely available. Kazakhstan had 477 Russian-language newspapers, and radio and TV broadcasting allocated 34% time to Russian-language shows in this period. According to the results of a survey conducted in 2002 administered to 857 people, the respondents also supported Russian as a language of social advancement and opportunities. The results indicated that larger number of female Kazakh college students expressed the aim to educate their children in Russian not in Kazakh. In the present situation, Russian is legalized, dominant and official language of Kazakhstan and a stable language in Kyrgyzstan. These countries are following bilingualism instead of shifting to their state language. The governments of both countries have expressed concerns about the decline of Russian in young generation and are

[24] Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries".

planning measures to alter this decline, mainly to improve relations with Russia and enhance migration of workers.[25]

Kazakhstan never distanced itself from Russia while pursuing a multi-vector foreign policy during the last three decades. Instead of lining up with Western countries and quitting relations with Russia, it has continued its ties with Russia, the US/EU, countries of Middle East, and China. It has helped Kazakhstan to maintain good relations among different ethnicities and to become economically strong. Trade with Russia has grown significantly in recent years. On the defense side, Russia and Kazakhstan are committed for mutual defense and both have joined the CSTO. Within the framework of the CSTO, Russia plays an important role in training military officers and soldiers of Kazakhstan at a bilateral level.[26] Kazakhstan has joined EAEU that was proposed by Vladimir Putin as an economic integration structure in 2013. It has beenoperational since January 2015. Kazakhstan has higher living standards and stronger economy than other Central Asian Republics because of its regional engagement. For Kazakhstan, Russia has been one of major trading partners. Majority of Kazakh oil and gas exports takes place through Russia, which make Russia more important for Kazakhstan than suggested by statistics. Lukoil, Gazprom, and Rosneft are the main Russian companies in Kazakh energy sector. Both countries have important bilateral ties on nuclear energy also.[27]

A Russian medium school system continues to exist in Kazakhstan. Parents prefer Russian which is regarded as a linguistic capital through which access to the wider labor-market and better quality of life is achieved. In 2015, Kazakh government was expecting that by the year 2020, 100% of the population would speak the Kazakh language, 95% Russian and 25% English. For the implementation of these goals, multilingual education was

[25] Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries".

[26] Glenn Diesen, "Kazakhstan: Imagining Globalisation 2.0." *The Astana Times*, 08 May 2020. Visit at https://astanatimes.com/2020/05/kazakhstan-imagining-globalisation-2-0/ (accessed 29 May 2022).

[27] N. Terlikbayeva and G. Menlibekova, "The Dynamics of Language Shift in Kazakhstan: Review Article", *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 3, No. 2 (2021). Visit at https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2021.3.2.2 (accessed 29 May 2022).

initiated in several Kazakhstani Universities and secondary schools, and e-learning was also developed.[28]

Revival of Russian language in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a one of five CARs where 65% of the population is Kyrgyz It has many nations and languages. People favor inter-ethnic marriages too. The main languages include, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkish, Uzbek, German, and Russian, but national language is distinguished and respected while majority of population prefer to educate their kids in Russian as this language opens the ways to many educational and employment opportunities as well as to economic advancement. After gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan did not think about Russian as an obstacle to its national sovereignty and security. Younger generation usually study Russian because they prefer to reach to university level education which is offered in Russian, operate business, or go to Russia for work (or settle there at higher living standards). The tension between some ethnic groups also promote the use of Russian as a lingua franca. Unlike other FSU countries that complained of Russian interference sometimes, Kyrgyzstan desired to gain more support of Moscow than it could receive. Out of all the support provided by the outside world, Kyrgyzstan economically stayed dependent on Russia, directly as well as through Kazakhstan.[29]

The CDHE report of 2004 indicates that Russian was used by 30% of the Kyrgyz people fluently, while 70% show competence in this language. Russian prevailed in media, higher education, and business throughout the second decade of independence while Kyrgyz language was also used alongside Russian in administration and official meetings.[30] After gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan did not consider the Russian language to be a threat to its national security or historical identity. It was granted an official status. On his February 1994 visit to Moscow, Askar Akayev, the then Kyrgyz President, signed several economic agreements. Having promised the Kyrgyz republic a 75-billion-ruble line of credit and some US$ 65 million

[28] Bibigul Yergaliyevna and Saule Z. Tazhibayeva, "Multilingualism in Modern Kazakhstan: New Challenges", *Asian Social Sciences*, 11. (2015).

[29] A. Orusbaev, A. Mustajoki, and E. Protassova, "Multilingualism, Russian Language and Education in Kyrgyzstan", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, No. 3-4, (2008): 476–500. See https://doi.org/10. 1080/13670050802148806 (accessed 29 May 2022).

[30] Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries".

in trade agreements, Russia also promised to extend to Kyrgyzstan the status of most-favored-nation for the purchase of oil and other fuels.[31]

Younger generation commonly learn Russian because they want to study at Kyrgyz universities where the main scientific literature and textbooks are in Russian. They want to conduct business with Russia, go to Russia for work, or stay where the standard of living is higher. Hundreds of these students receive free education in Russian universities annually. About 900,000 Kyrgyz students of reproductive age were working in Russia in the second decade of independence and they sent about $300-500 million worth of remittances to their families. This amount is equivalent to the annual budget of the country.[32]

At the start of the 21st century, the bilateral relations between the two nations got more strengthened. Although Russian language competence was decreasing in start but later on the Kyrgyz government started promoting the Russian language for their younger and new generations. The program 'Russian language in Kyrgyzstan', implemented in 2006-2010, was aimed to prepare new emigrants to work and live in Russia.

Russia has been the second largest export and import partner of Kyrgyzstan for last two decades. Relations with Russia have always remained a first priority for Kyrgyzstan because of its security and economic dependence on Russia. Kyrgyzstan joined the Customs Union (CU) in 1996. In 2015, it gained membership of the EAEU.[33]

The Russian language enjoys a boost in Kyrgyzstan, and good economic and political relations of both countries will keep the status of the Russian unchanged in Kyrgyzstan. The remittances channeled from Russia into Kyrgyzstan were 18% in 2010 which accounted for 27% of Kyrgyz GDP.[34]

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[31] Protassova, "Multilingualism, Russian Language and Education in Kyrgyzstan".

[32] Ibid.

[33] J. Pike, "Kyrgyzstan - Russian Relations", Global Security Organization (2019). Visit at https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/kyrgyz-forrel-ru.htm (accessed 29 May 2022).

[34] Sinitsina, "Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries".

Revival of Russian language in Tajikistan

According to the 1994 constitution of Tajikistan, Tajik declared as the official language of the State while Russian has been recognized as an instrument of interethnic communication. Among ethnic groups, Kyrgyz, and Pashto are spoken while Uzbek is spoken by nearly 25% of the population. Russian is widely used in offices and businesses. Variants of Tajik are spoken in the mountains of Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan's autonomous province in the eastern region. It was estimated after independence that Tajik was spoken by 62% of the people. Russian was spoken by 36% non-Russian population in urban areas who were mostly businessmen and government officials.

According to the Prof. Sebastein Peyrouse, besides Russian emigration on a large scale, the presence of Russian military in Tajikistan as well as the strong economic bonds of Tajikistan with Russia is responsible for the policies which maintain Russian language in Tajikistan.[35] Decrease in Russian language competence was seen in Tajikistan after independence, although it granted Russian the status of interethnic communication and Tajik was granted the official status. The CDHE report of 2004 reveals that Russian was fluently used by 16% of the people, while 48% retained Russian language competence. However, the country started taking measures in the second decade of independence to mark the badly decreasing levels of Russian-language. In 2004, Rakhmonov, President of Tajikistan, made Russian language teaching mandatory from the 2nd to 11th grade in all schools of the country. Its streams are available in establishments of higher education. "The Russian-Tajik Slavic University" offers instruction entirely in Russian. Near the completion of second decade of independence, 30,058 (25.4%) out of 118,427 university students were educated in Russian language in Tajikistan. The Russian government exclusively supported these initiatives and offered opportunities and resources to professionals of Russian language.[36] In January 2020, Tajikistan's parliament approved an agreement to build five new Russian schools, with funds largely provided by the Russian government. There are already 32 Russian-only schools in Tajikistan, with 10 of them established in

[35] Cited in Population, Demography and Language in Tajikistan*, Facts and Details*, (2008). Available at https://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Tajikistan/sub8_6b/entry-4863.html (accessed 29 May 2022).

[36] Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries".

the past two years. Dozens of mixed-language schools offer education in both Tajik and Russian classes.

On June 22, 2009, a new legislation was proposed by President Imomali Rakhmon for boosting the use of Tajik language in public sphere which was criticized by the communist leader Shodishabdolov. Opponents of this move pointed to the political, cultural, and economic relations of Tajikistan with Russia. According to the figures of World Bank, 30-40% of Tajikistan's GDP is contributed by the remittances sent by about 1.5 million Tajik migrants, working in Russia and Kazakhstan. They must have enough knowledge of this language for operating well in Russia. Galina Sobirova, "a Dushanbe-based sociologist" suggested to Institute of War & Peace Reporting (IWPR) that Russian language was a need for Tajik labor migrants, representatives and other public figures that represented Tajikistan in former Soviet space. Another journalist, Khurshed Atovullo, expressed the same view that we should pay the same special attention to promoting Russian language in our country as we are paying to Tajik. In this way, we can save our labor migrants from running into difficulties in Russia who are helping our economy. Tajikistan, being dependent on Russia especially in security and economic sphere, is trying to strengthen its relations with Russia now by promoting Russian language in the country. Promotion of Russian language in the country is not only for getting soft corner with Russia but also it is a need for Tajik citizens' bright future. Each of the new Russian school (for which an agreement was recently approved by Tajikistan's parliament) will be designed to hold 1200 students at least. This move shows the willingness of Tajik authorities for maintaining close relationship with Russia and reflects a growing demand for Russian-language education among Tajiks.[37]

In 2018, Tajikistan's main trading partners were Russia and Kazakhstan. China is also playing role in Tajik economy. Much of population in Tajikistan relies on farming supplemented by remittances in Russia.[38] The reasons for consistent growth in the third decade of independence include remittances

[37] F. Najibullah, No Shortage of Students as Tajikistan Builds New Russian Schools, *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty* (20, January 2020). Visit at https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-new-russian-schools/30384557html#:%7E:text=There%20are%20already%2032%20Russian,and%20Russian%20classes%2C%20taught%20separately (accessed 29 May 2022).

[38] Kamila Aliyeva, "Tajikistan's Foreign Trade Up", 20 February 2018. Visit at https://www.azernews.az/region/127512.html (accessed 29 May 2022).

and Roghun hydropower plant of Tajikistan. According to the Statistical Agency of Tajikistan, over US$ 380 million was directly invested by the Russian companies into the Tajik economy between 2005 and 2010. More than 60 joint firms are registered in Tajikistan. Additionally, Gazprom began working at three other sites of Tajikistan in 2010.[39] The second largest trading partner of the Republic is Russia which exports inorganic chemicals mineral fuels, iron, steel, and mineral oils to Tajikistan. In 2016, both exports and imports between Tajikistan and Russia were US$ 26.4 million and US$ 661.5 million respectively.[40] Moscow ranked first in 2019 for Tajikistan's total trade volume with foreign countries. In January-October 2019, Tajik-Russian trade turnover amounted to US$859.1 million. Imports from Russia to Tajikistan were 30.4 percent of the total imports while imports from Kazakhstan were 21.4 percent and from China were 17.9 percent. Total exports amounted to US$961.3 million, and imports amounted to more than US$2.7 billion in 2019.[41]

Revival of Russian language in Turkmenistan

After the breakup of USSR, Turkmenistan was one of the many countries which aimed to keep itself away from the Soviet past. Since independence, Russian language experienced enormous difficulties in Turkmenistan. Russian speakers decreased by threefold at the end of the second decade of independence. An enormous migration of these people during the 90s due to Turkmenization policies of the state and decline in Russian language education have eroded the position of Russian language. A shift to the Latin script after independence deprived Turkmenistan from Cyrillic alphabet. Beginning a new style of reading and writing for new generations caused tremendous difficulties for adult residents of Turkmenistan. The "Turkmenization" project deprived the Russian population from getting opportunities to capture higher positions in government services. Currently, all representatives in state are Turkmen speakers because policies of government are very slow and no one except the President is considered as a centre of power by the population. Strangely, there is a

[39] Sinitsina, "Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries".

[40] Amana Habib Ullah, Republic of Tajikistan. *The Pakistan Business Council Report*, (2017),11- 49. Available at https://www.pbc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/ReportTajikistan.pdf (accessed 29 May 2022).

[41] A. Kerimkhanov, "Russia Tajikistan's Main Trade Partner", *AzerNews*, 21 November 2019. Visit at https://www.azernews.az/region/158697.html#:~:text=Import%20of%20goods%20to%20Tajikistan,to%20more%20than%20%242.7%20billion. (accessed 29 May 2022).

limited access for applicants speaking minority languages in local universities. The education reforms resulted in a huge reduction of Russian language teaching. Initially, Russian and Turkmen schools were combined, but, later on, they completely diminished or reduced to one or two Russian classes. In Turkmenistan, Russian was fluently spoken by two percent population while nineteen percent retained competence in it at the start of the 21st century.[42] In Turkmenistan, the Russian language is just a Soviet legacy. The remaining Russian speaking people of Turkmenistan mostly live in the regional centers and capital. Due to the decline of Russian in education system, Turkish and English languages have stepped into this vacuum. The promotion of Turkish language is because of "Turkmen-Turkish" strong relations that have given rise to the development of "Turkmen-Turkish lyceums, investment, and companies of Turkey throughout the republic, along with familiarity with their culture. Good neighborhood relations of the two countries have allowed Turkish gain an important place in Turkmenistan.

Moreover, a significant part of the Turkmen population exposed to the excessive spread of satellite dishes easily connected with the Turkish media. Their broadcasts, serials, talk shows, and music have given birth to a "Turkish culture" on the soil of Turkmenistan. The Turkish language is also common in Turkmenistan because many migrants live and work in Turkey.

Also, English occupied a privileged place in Turkmenistan but did not become a language of communication there.[43] Currently, despite the consistent Turkmenization and decline in number of language speakers, it can be assumed from the current situation that Russian language will possibly exist in Turkmenistan in the foreseeable future.

Russian language performs the function of communication tool among various ethnicities, a mediator in secular spheres and a qualification booster in many areas. A city dweller can be easily differentiated from a rural townsman on the basis of his knowledge of the Russian language. Russian language is used by Turkmen people not only for communicating but also for consuming many products of the Russian market and their Internet segment. The market offers and welcomes people who are proficient in Russian. Alexander Pushkin is the only Russian school of

[42] Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries".
[43] "Turkmen Paradox: De Jure - There Is No Russian Language, De Facto".

Turkmenistan which is a joint school of both countries in Ashgabat. This is the only school where events are held by the support of the Russian Embassy in dedication to Russian language, history, and culture. The benefit of education in this school is to get access for admission in a Russian university, which many parents aim there.[44]

The interest in Russian is now growing as Russian language creates opportunities that are cannot be attained in Turkmen. However, the Russian language still does not receive any meaningful backing on a state level. Turkmenistan has instead close trade relations with China, Afghanistan, and Turkey etc. This is the reason that they prefer Turkish and English languages more than Russian. Russia comes on number seven in trade and trade relations of Turkmenistan and Russia are limited as compared to other countries.

According to the 2018 data of Turkmen trade, Turkmenistan exports gas mostly to China through the Central Asia – China gas pipeline system and other exports to Afghanistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Georgia while imports mostly from Turkey, China, Russia and UAE.[45] There are no significant joint ventures between Russia and Turkmenistan except oil and gas sectors. There was no Foreign Direct Investment (FDIs) from Russia into the Turkmen economy in the second decade of independence.[46] Russia is only interested in gas sector of Turkmenistan. The Russian energy firm ITERA operates in Turkmenistan. Though low economic and trade relations may be seen as low priority for Russian language, however, Russia still plays an important role in providing jobs and remittances to the Turkmen people which makes the Russian language important for the republic. Around US$ 88.3 million were sent in remittances to Turkmenistan from Russia in 2017.[47]

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44 Ibid.

45 P. Partensky, Turkmenistan (TKM) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners, *Profile*, The Observatory of Economic Complexity, available from https://oec.world/en/profile/ country/tkm/ (accessed 29 May 2022).

46 Sinitsina, "Economic Cooperation between Russia and Central Asian Countries".

47 Turkmenistan Migrant Remittance, (2017). Visit at https://countryeconomy.com/demo graphy/migration/remittance/ turkmenistan (accessed 29 May 2022).

Conclusion

It is obvious that after a general decline of Russian language use and education during the decade of 1990s, there is a revival of Russian language in the CARs with the start of the 21st century. There are few important factors responsible for the revival of Russian language use and education in the CARs. The strong economic dependence of the CARs on Russia developed during the Tsarist and particularly Soviet era is one of the most important factors.

Language has a significant connection with economic benefits. It is proved by the in-depth analysis. The Russian language, according to the theory of Economics of Language, is still bringing substantial dividends to the state and society in Central Asia. Russian language has been important in transforming the society in the region. Even after passing of the three decades, the job markets in Russia, the CIS, and even Central Asia, the remittances from Russia to the CARs and regional geo-political dynamics played an important role in these adaptation trends of Russian language by the CARs.

Russia's political and economic resurgence after 2001 has also played an important role in this regard. The politically and economically stable Russia started re-focusing on its relations with the former Soviet states including those that straddles the Central Asian region. Russia considers the former Soviet space as an area of special influence and claims for itself a privileged role there. In this context, Russia also re-emphasized on promoting Russian language in the CARs. The CARs also focused on improving the political and economic relations with Russia. Four of the CARs are already members of Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) which will further augment and increase the importance of the Russian language for the CARs.