E-ISSN: 2997-9439
American Journal of Education and Evaluation Studies
https://semantjournals.org/index.php/ AJEES

| Research Article

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About the Concepts of National Language, Literary Language and State Language

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Abstract: This article examines pressing sociolinguistic issues directly reflecting language policies in various regions, focusing on the development of national languages, literary (standard) languages, and state languages. The concepts of nation, national language, literary language, and state language are analyzed based on sociolinguistic studies and statistical data. Particular attention is given to the development of Uzbek and Tajik languages during the periods before and after independence.

Keywords: nation, national language, literary language, state language, official language, language policy, constitution, Uzbek language, Tajik language, UNESCO, CIS countries, "Law on the State Language," Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan.

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Introduction

Language is one of the most ancient and invaluable social phenomena of humanity, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a fundamental tool for preserving and understanding national identity. The social, economic, political, and cultural development of any nation is inherently reflected in its language. This article focuses on the sociocultural and political significance of the concepts of national language, literary language, and state language. The study analyzes the essence and evolution of language policy, particularly examining the development of Uzbek and Tajik languages before and after independence and their role as national and state languages.

Literature Review

Several studies have explored the role of language policy in the development of national languages. For example, A. Nurmonov described the national language as "the heart of the nation," while Gulrukhsor Safieva linked the demise of a nation to the loss of its language. UNESCO has launched numerous international initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting national languages, including the declaration of February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

In the CIS countries, the constitutional foundations for state and official languages have been widely established. Studies by Qosimov (2010) and Saidov (2015) provide valuable insights into

language policy and its role in governance within the CIS states. Research by X. Asqarov highlights the impact of other languages, such as Arabic, Persian, and Russian, on the lexical and structural enrichment of Uzbek and Tajik languages.

Methods and Methodology

This study employs the following methods and methodologies:

Analytical Method: Used to examine the theoretical aspects and legal foundations of national, literary, and state language concepts.

Comparative Method: Applied to compare the development of Uzbek and Tajik languages, their status as state languages, and the influence of other languages on their growth.

Historical Method: Utilized to analyze the status and stages of development of Uzbek and Tajik languages before and after independence.

Sociological Method: Employed to analyze surveys and statistical data related to language policy in CIS countries.

Document Analysis: Focused on studying constitutions, the "Law on the State Language," and other regulatory documents from CIS states.

By utilizing these methods, the study addresses the social, legal, and cultural dimensions of language policy and draws conclusions regarding the prospects of Uzbek and Tajik languages as state languages.

The main part

Language is one of the fundamental markers and elements of a nation's self-identity, simultaneously serving as a crucial and invaluable component of its national and cultural heritage. The social, economic, political, and cultural progress of any nation is embodied in its language. Language plays a significant role in the development of a nation, as it encompasses all of the nation's spiritual wealth.

A nation is a historically formed community of people created based on shared language, territory, economic life, and a collective spiritual worldview [1,801]. Uzbek linguist A. Nurmonov aptly describes language as "the heart of the nation" [2,232]. Similarly, other scholars have metaphorically defined language as "the mirror of the nation," "its identity card," and "its soul," highlighting its indispensable role in the existence and development of a nation.

Each nation has its unique perspective on cherishing its native language as a national language, shaped by scholars, intellectuals, and politicians from different cultures. For instance, the American scholar Irvin Grinn remarked, *"If one loses their national language, they inevitably lose their entire culture as well"* [3,20-34]. Similarly, the Avar writer R. Hamzatov famously stated, *"If I knew my language would die tomorrow, I would prefer to die today"* [4,88]. Uzbek enlightenment writer Abdulla Avloni expressed, *"The language and literature of every nation are the mirrors of its life. Losing the national language is equivalent to losing the spirit of the nation"* [5]. Tajik poetess Gulrukhsor Safieva also emphasized, *"The death of a nation begins with the death of its language, and the death of a language starts with the apathy and alienation of its speakers"* [6,133]. These profound sociolinguistic reflections compel everyone to consider the critical importance of preserving one's native language.

The national language is a means of communication, both in written and oral literary forms, that serves as the mother tongue for a particular nation within a specific region. It possesses unique features and dialectal variations and plays a vital role in fostering national unity and cohesion. Every nation has its national language, although in some cases, a single nation may have multiple languages. For instance, "Belgians are one nation, yet they speak French and Walloon. Similarly,

the Swiss are one nation but communicate in German, French, and Italian." Conversely, the populations of several countries may share a single national language, such as the use of English in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other countries. In English-speaking nations, variants of the national language, like American and Australian English, are used. The formation and development of all nations are closely tied to the evolution of their literary language [7].

The national language is considered the written and oral literary form of communication of a particular people. It is one of the fundamental pillars of society, the state, and statehood. According to social media data, Chinese serves as the national language for 1.2 billion people across 33 countries, while English has the same status for 355 million people (and is a second language for 505 million) in 101 countries. Spanish is spoken by 399 million people as a first language (and 9 million as a second) in 31 countries. Russian is the mother tongue for 166 million people (and a second language for 125 million) in 16 countries, while Arabic serves as the first language for 242 million (and as a second for 21 million) in 60 countries. Portuguese is the national language for 203 million people (and a second language for 28 million) in 12 countries, and French serves 76 million people as a mother tongue (and 87 million as a second language) across 10 countries [8].

Statistical data show that over 50 million people communicate in Uzbek and consider it their national language. One of the ancient languages, Persian-Dari-Tajik, is spoken by more than 122 million people, with over 47 million communicating according to Tajik language standards [9].

Despite belonging to different linguistic families, Uzbek and Tajik languages share numerous lexical borrowings. Tajik words are commonly found in the Uzbek lexicon, and vice versa. This phenomenon reflects the centuries-long coexistence of the two peoples, whose cultures, arts, and traditions have developed in harmony [10, 3-5].

According to Uzbek linguist A. Nurmonov, three key elements define a nation and its people: the national language, the nation’s history, and its cultural values. These elements remain the pillars of any nation's identity. Uzbek is the national language of the Uzbek people and has been recognized as the state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan since October 21, 1989. Classified as part of the Turkic language family, it belongs to the Karluk branch and has an agglutinative structure. Uzbek is widely spoken in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, China’s Xinjiang Autonomous Region, the United States, Germany, and other countries where it is used by specific population groups [2, 232].

Tajik is the national language of the Tajik people and is historically and contemporarily recognized as Persian and Dari. It belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family and has an inflectional structure. Tajik is widely spoken in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, China’s Sanggul and Xinjiang regions, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, the United States, Germany, and various regions in other countries.

In the late 1980s, significant changes occurred in the political and social life of the Soviet Union due to the ideas of restructuring and democratization. The population seized this opportunity to restore and strengthen their national values, including their native languages. A review of the materials published during this period reveals that intellectuals, particularly writers, actively participated in this movement. The following quotes reflect the status of national languages and the language policy of the previous regime:

E. Vohidov (Uzbek writer):

"Our native language was treated as foreign in Uzbekistan. We forgot how to write applications, hold meetings, or converse with representatives of official institutions in our mother tongue... As a result, a generation emerged that knew nothing of their native language" [10, 180].

Olzhas Suleimenov (Kazakh poet):

"Why, as a Kazakh poet, am I writing in Russian? Shouldn't I be composing poetry in my native language? Unfortunately, the younger generation of my people, my peers, and the new generation entering life have not read books in Kazakh. This is an irreparable pain for me" [10, 150].

A conversation between Chingiz Aitmatov (Kyrgyz writer) and Mustay Karim (Bashkir writer):

— "I often hear criticism," said Mustay Karim, sitting beside Chingiz Aitmatov. "I am criticized for not writing in Kyrgyz. Why? Because, in my native language, there are no words to express the truth."
The great writer handed the famous poet a newspaper titled *Frunze Pravda.*
— "Don't worry, my friend," said Mustay, with his characteristic politeness. "The Kyrgyz language is far superior and more powerful than my Bashkir language. This article was recently published in one of our journals. Look at the title: *The Condition of Peasants in Soviet Russia.* If this system remains, we are bound to forget our languages" [10, 110].

Rasul Hamzatov (Avar writer):

"The languages of nations are like heavenly stars to me. I did not wish for all stars to merge into one great star. There is no need for a giant star, as one sun is enough. But stars, too, must shine. Let everyone have their own star" [11, 13].

These reflections highlight the struggles faced by national languages during the Soviet era and the determination of writers and intellectuals to preserve and revive them.

Gulrukhsor Safieva, a Tajik writer, profoundly stated, *"The death of a nation begins with the death of its language, and the death of a language stems from the apathy and alienation of its speakers"* [12, 280].

As the condition of national languages and language policies in the dependent republics grew increasingly critical, discussions on these matters were held in Moscow, primarily at the Union of Soviet Writers, as well as in newspaper and journal offices. Among the republics of the former Soviet Union, Latvia and Estonia were the first to advocate for change in their language policies. They succeeded in restoring and establishing their national languages, Latvian and Estonian, as state languages. These efforts offer valuable insights into addressing the linguistic challenges of the Soviet era, as the frail condition of national languages in the late 1980s was closely tied to the prevailing political environment.

Studying the perspectives of linguists from that period can help identify and rectify the shortcomings in language policy. Throughout history, many nations have succumbed to political, economic, and cultural struggles, often losing their languages in the process. However, when intellectuals and language communities take responsibility for safeguarding their national and cultural values, such struggles can lead to victory.

UNESCO declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day in 2000, emphasizing the importance of preserving every nation’s language. This initiative aims to prevent the loss of this invaluable treasure — the mother tongue. As UNESCO states, *"As long as a person continues to use their native language, that language remains alive"* [12].

The national literary language is a refined and standardized form of the national language designed to meet the cultural needs of the people. It is a developed and enriched linguistic system [13, 205]. The literary language serves as the common written and spoken language of a people, and in some cases, of multiple peoples. It is used in official documentation, education, science,

journalism, literature, and everyday communication, both orally and in writing. In Uzbek and Tajik linguistics, definitions and standards of the national literary language are determined based on the linguistic features of the language.

The **Uzbek literary language** is a polished version of the national language, standardized according to certain norms to cater to the cultural needs of the people [14, 10]. Its core vocabulary is derived primarily from the Uzbek vernacular, but over centuries it has significantly enriched its lexicon through interaction with Tajik-Persian, Arabic, Russian, and other languages. The Uzbek literary language has a long history, having fully developed by the 14th-15th centuries. In the 20th century, especially during its first half, the language was simplified and adapted to meet contemporary requirements.

The **Tajik literary language** has existed for over a millennium and developed after the Arab conquest, based on local dialects and ancient Iranian languages. Historical, literary, and scientific sources confirm its evolution. Through cultural exchanges with other peoples, the Tajik literary language enhanced its foundational structure and vocabulary, progressing through several historical stages. The creation of numerous literary and scientific works in Tajik attests to its antiquity and widespread usage. The modern Tajik literary language emerged in the early 20th century, characterized by the integration of lexical and grammatical norms from classical literary language and local dialects, making it simpler and more accessible to the masses.

In the 21st century, known as the age of information technology and globalization, the preservation and development of many languages have become a pressing task. Across various countries, including those in the CIS, the development of national languages is evident. Legislative bodies in these countries have established national languages as state languages, securing their status and prestige through constitutions and laws such as "On the State Language" [15]. In CIS countries, national languages, as symbols and pillars of statehood, have become integral parts of national policy.

State Language

A **state language** is the language that holds the highest status within a country and is used to regulate official and normative documents, as well as translate them into other minority languages. In many countries, the state language and the official language are considered the same. In multi-ethnic countries, the state and official languages are usually specified in the constitution.

Official Language

An **official language** is a language enshrined in a country's legislation and officially recognized for use in certain regions. For example, the Swiss Constitution recognizes German, French, and Italian as state languages, and they are also acknowledged as official languages. In some regions, official languages are used alongside the state language.

The Soviet Union serves as an example: According to Article 4 of the *Law on the Languages of the Peoples of the USSR* (April 24, 1990), "Considering the existing historical conditions, the Russian language is recognized as the official language within the USSR for ensuring inter-republic functions and interethnic communication." In practice, Russian served as the USSR's official language. An official language can be used within the territory of the state. For instance, under Article 7 of Kazakhstan's Constitution (1995), Kazakh is the state language of the Republic, while Russian is used officially in state organizations and local self-government bodies alongside Kazakh [16].

These distinctions illustrate the structured approach to managing linguistic diversity within countries, ensuring the functionality and representation of national and official languages in governance and society.

It is worth noting that the issue of state or official languages was raised in the late 1920s in the Central Asian republics, including Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Archival records preserved in both countries provide evidence of this [17, 3]. Despite resolutions granting Uzbek and Tajik languages state status, their practical implementation was hindered primarily because administrative positions were largely occupied by Russians, who sought to promote Russification in these regions. This issue persisted until the late 1980s, despite growing discontent among the local population.

Following the declaration of independence by the CIS republics and their recognition by international organizations, including the United Nations, the constitutions and laws of these nations (e.g., the "Law on the State Language") explicitly outlined the state's social policies and functions, the status of state and official languages, and the languages of national minorities. Examples include:

Azerbaijan: Azerbaijani language (Article 21)

Armenia: Armenian language (Article 12)

Lithuania: Lithuanian language (Article 14)

Latvia: Latvian language (Article 4)

Estonia: Estonian language (Article 6)

Moldova: Moldovan language (Article 13)

Ukraine: Ukrainian language (Article 10)

Belarus: Belarusian and Russian languages (Article 17)

Georgia: Georgian language; Abkhazian language in the Abkhazia Autonomous Republic (Article 8)

Abkhazia: Abkhazian and Russian languages (Article 6)

Russia: Russian language; regional languages in autonomous republics (Article 68)

South Ossetia: Ossetian, Russian, and Georgian languages (Article 4)

Turkmenistan: Turkmen language (Article 14)

Uzbekistan: Uzbek language (Article 4)

Kazakhstan: Kazakh language (Article 7)

Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyz and Russian languages (Article 5)

Tajikistan: Tajik language, with Russian as the international language (Article 2).

These legal provisions reflect the efforts of the newly independent states to preserve and institutionalize their national languages while addressing the multilingual realities of their societies.

Some countries enshrine in their constitutions the requirement for presidents and other high-ranking officials to have a full command of the state language. For example, Article 90 of the **Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan** states:

"A citizen of the Republic of Uzbekistan who is at least thirty-five years old, has a good command of the state language, and has permanently resided in Uzbekistan for at least 10 years immediately preceding the election may be elected President of the Republic of Uzbekistan..." [18, 23].

Similarly, Article 65 of the **Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan** states:

"Only a citizen of the Republic of Tajikistan who is at least 30 years old, has a higher education, is proficient in the state language, and has resided in the republic for at least 10 years may be nominated for the presidency" [19, 17].

Conclusion

To preserve the national language as a state language, the adoption of laws such as the "Law on the State Language" or government measures aimed at promoting the state language are necessary but not sufficient. For the national language to thrive as a state language, every citizen must embrace it as a symbol of national values and moral heritage, demonstrating its power and resilience within the community of languages. Citizens must take responsibility for ensuring that the language remains vibrant and undefeated.

To achieve success in this endeavor, the following factors must be considered:

The state language must become one of the primary symbols and pillars of the state.

The state language should be regarded as the ancestral language and a marker of national identity.

The norms of the state language must be upheld, distancing it from dialectal elements.

The state language should find its expression in the nation's greatest works.

The state language must reflect the national spirit.

The state language should possess unique qualities in terms of speech expression and tone, highlighting its distinct characteristics.

The state language should feature its own stylistic branches, such as literary styles and their varieties, as well as oral literary styles.

Attention must be given to the role of the state language in developing national consciousness and intellectual growth.

By addressing these factors, the state language can secure its place as a vibrant and enduring element of national identity.

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