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Evaluating Policies and Prospects of Alphabet Reform:
The Case of Kazakhstan Considered in a Comparative
Lens with Uzbekistan

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract and Acknowledgements</i>	1
I. Introduction	2
a. A Brief History of Alphabet Reform: Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan	5
b. Aims and Thesis Structure	9
c. Literature Review	10
i. National Identity	11
ii. Alphabet Choice	13
iii. Relevant Reform Factors	17
d. Methodology	21
i. Limitations of the Study	24
II. Survey Respondent Background Information	26
III. Public Opinion as a Factor Affecting Reform Success	32
a. Results	32
b. Discussion	37
IV. Education as a Factor Affecting Reform Success	41
a. Results	41
b. Discussion	43
V. Politics as a Factor Affecting Reform Success	47
a. Results	47
b. Discussion	50
VI. Linguistics as a Factor Affecting Reform Success	54
a. Results	54
b. Discussion	56
i. Background Information: Uzbekistan's Latin Alphabets	56
ii. Kazakhstan's Latin Alphabets	60
VII. Uzbekistan / Other Nations: A Comparative Review	64
a. Results	64
b. Discussion: Possible Future Directions and the Serbian Model	65
VIII. Concluding Remarks	68
IX. Bibliography	70
X. Appendix	74

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Map, Location of Uzbekistan
2. Map, Location of Kazakhstan
3. Map, Alphabets of the World
4. Pie chart, Respondent Occupations
5. Pie chart, Age of Survey Respondents
6. Column chart, Russian Language Competency of Respondents
7. Column chart, Kazakh Language Competency of Respondents
8. Column chart, English Language Competency of Respondents
9. Column chart, Respondent Languages Spoken at Home
10. Column chart, Respondent Languages Spoken with Peers
11. Pie chart, Respondent's General Support of the Alphabet Reform
12. Pie chart, Support with Ages Under 25
13. Pie chart, Support with Ages 26-50
14. Pie chart, Support with Ages 51+
15. Column chart, Most Cited Benefits of the Alphabet Reform
16. Column chart, Most Cited Negatives of the Alphabet Reform
17. Pie chart, Respondent's Opinion on Whether Reform is a Political Statement Against Russia
18. Pie chart, Respondent's Opinion on Whether Kazakhstanis are More Likely to Learn Kazakh Post-Reform
19. Poster from Uzbekistan's 2019 parliamentary election in Uzbek Cyrillic
20. Poster from Uzbekistan's 2019 parliamentary election in the Uzbek Latin alphabet
21. Pie chart, Respondent's Opinion on Whether the Reform was a Democratic Decision
22. Pie chart, Respondent's Opinion on Whether the Kazakhstani Government is Adequately Communicating Reform Progress to the Public
23. Pie chart, Respondent's Opinion on Whether Russian Usage will Cause Difficulties with Learning the New Alphabet
24. Pie chart, Respondent's Opinion on Whether Uzbekistan's Alphabet Reform Ought to be Considered a Failure
25. Signs in Belgrade, Serbia, observing synchronic digraphia with Cyrillic and Latin
26. Pie chart, Percentage of Respondents who would Support a Two Alphabet System

ABSTRACT

History has shown us that human language, and the media and mechanisms used to record it, are changeable. The languages of Uzbek and Kazakh are currently experiencing such transformation in the form of an alphabet transition, in both cases from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. Uzbekistan officially commenced this reform in the early 1990s, with Kazakhstan following suit in 2017. Historically, both nations have switched alphabets on several occasions. Uzbekistan's most recent attempt is widely considered a failure due to the length of time already involved, alongside the fact that it still remains far from complete. An examination of the shortcomings with Uzbekistan's reform allows us to chronicle key factors involved in facilitating successful change; public opinion, education, politics, and linguistics. This thesis explores those factors within the Kazakhstani context through primary research. A survey was created with questions relating to the four factors and was taken by seventy-five respondents consisting of Kazakhstanis, Kazakh speakers, and several experts in the field of linguistics and alphabet reform. Quantitative and qualitative data was sought and compared to prior scholarship concerning Uzbekistan's reform, in order to determine the likelihood that Kazakhstan's reform would be more successful. Kazakhstan's policymakers have no doubt attempted to learn from Uzbekistan's mistakes. However, complications caused by COVID-19, in addition to a lack of public information coming from the government as well as an incomplete version of the Kazakh Latin alphabet could lead to Kazakhstan's alphabet reform being dragged out over a long period of time, implying a potential failure akin to Uzbekistan's. However, the study also determined that recently-elected Kazakhstani President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev is dedicated to completing the reform in a conscientious and unhurried manner, thereby increasing Kazakhstan's chances of successful Latinization. Serbia's system of synchronic digraphia, officially utilizing both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, is a potential failsafe – or solution – in the outcome of a failed reform.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Suppose that one morning you awoke to your local media outlet informing you that your nation – and your native language – will be transitioning to a new alphabet. If you are based in a country such as the United States or the Netherlands, this means the irrelevance of the modified Latin alphabet that you learned as a child in school. The medium that you have lived your entire life using as a means of communicating and receiving information has changed. Your government has made the decision, perhaps without even consulting you, to switch your native language to the Cyrillic alphabet. As it stands, you have little knowledge of Cyrillic. Perhaps you have seen it in films or television programs involving Russia or the former Soviet Republics, but you hardly know any of the individual letters, and have never contemplated its practical application to your day-to-day life. You begin to wonder how it will be possible for you to start writing and reading English or Dutch in the Cyrillic alphabet. What will street signs and store names look like? What difficulties will children face at school during this transition? Do you have to get a new passport in the Cyrillic alphabet? Is it even worth it for you to support the change, or should you stubbornly continue using the Latin alphabet even though everything around you is morphing into Cyrillic? The situation thus described may seem like insanity for the majority of citizens around the world; individuals who were raised never having to entertain the idea that their native language could one day be written in an alphabet that is strange to them.

For the people of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, this scenario is a pressing reality. Uzbekistan is a Central Asian country with a population of approximately 33 million. Its capital is Tashkent. The official language of Uzbekistan is Uzbek, a member of the Turkic family of languages. For reference, English, Spanish, and Russian are members of the Indo-European language family which can further be respectively subdivided into the subbranches of Germanic, Romance, and Slavic languages.¹ Although Uzbek is the official language of Uzbekistan, Russian is still widely spoken as a result of Uzbekistan's status as a republic of the Soviet Union from 1924 to 1991.²

¹ There are many branches of the Indo-European language family spanning most of Europe and large parts of Asia; Germanic, Romance, and Slavic happen to be the largest subbranches on the continent of Europe.

² Gavin R.G. Hambly, Denis Sinor, Edward Allworth, and David Roger Smith, "Uzbekistan," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., March 27, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uzbekistan>.



Fig. 1. Location of Uzbekistan.
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Central Asian country of Kazakhstan, which borders Uzbekistan to the north, has a population of approximately 18 million. Kazakhstan's capital is Nur-Sultan (changed from Astana in 2019). Kazakh, also a Turkic language, is the state language of Kazakhstan. However, Russian enjoys co-official status with the Kazakh language and is in reality the most widely spoken language in the country. As with Uzbekistan, this is the result of the nation's time as a republic of the Soviet Union from 1936 to 1991.³



Fig. 2. Location of Kazakhstan.
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

³ Gavin R.G. Hambly, Denis Sinor, Edward Allworth, and David Roger Smith, "Kazakhstan," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., June 25, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kazakhstan>.

Doing the opposite of our United States or Netherlands thought experiment, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are currently transitioning the languages of Uzbek and Kazakh from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. Transitioning one's language to a different alphabet is known as an *alphabet reform*. The Latin alphabet, often also called the Roman alphabet, is the most widely used writing system in the world. It is the alphabet used to write most major European languages such as English, Spanish, and German.⁴ The Cyrillic alphabet originates from approximately the ninth century CE. The alphabet was created for Slavic-speaking peoples who observed the Eastern Orthodox religion. Cyrillic is used to write more than 50 languages, mostly located in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Languages that utilize the Cyrillic alphabet include Bulgarian, Russian, Ukrainian, and Kyrgyz.⁵ The process of reforming a language's alphabet specifically from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet is called Latinization.⁶

This thesis examines Latinization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and contends with questions concerning the prospects of a successful reform in Kazakhstan. To address this, ongoing and past reforms within Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were studied in order to identify core factors which have impacted upon those processes. This revealed four key avenues of inquiry, discussed in the literature review: public opinion, education policies, politics and linguistics. A survey was designed to explore these general issues within the context of Kazakhstan's current reform goals, detailed in the methodology section. Based on that data collection an evaluation can be made of Kazakhstan's current strategies, in which problematic areas can be identified alongside suggestions for maximizing a successful reform outlook.

⁴ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Latin Alphabet," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., May 27, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Latin-alphabet>.

⁵ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Cyrillic Alphabet," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., May 20, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Cyrillic-alphabet>.

⁶ This is also known as Romanization.

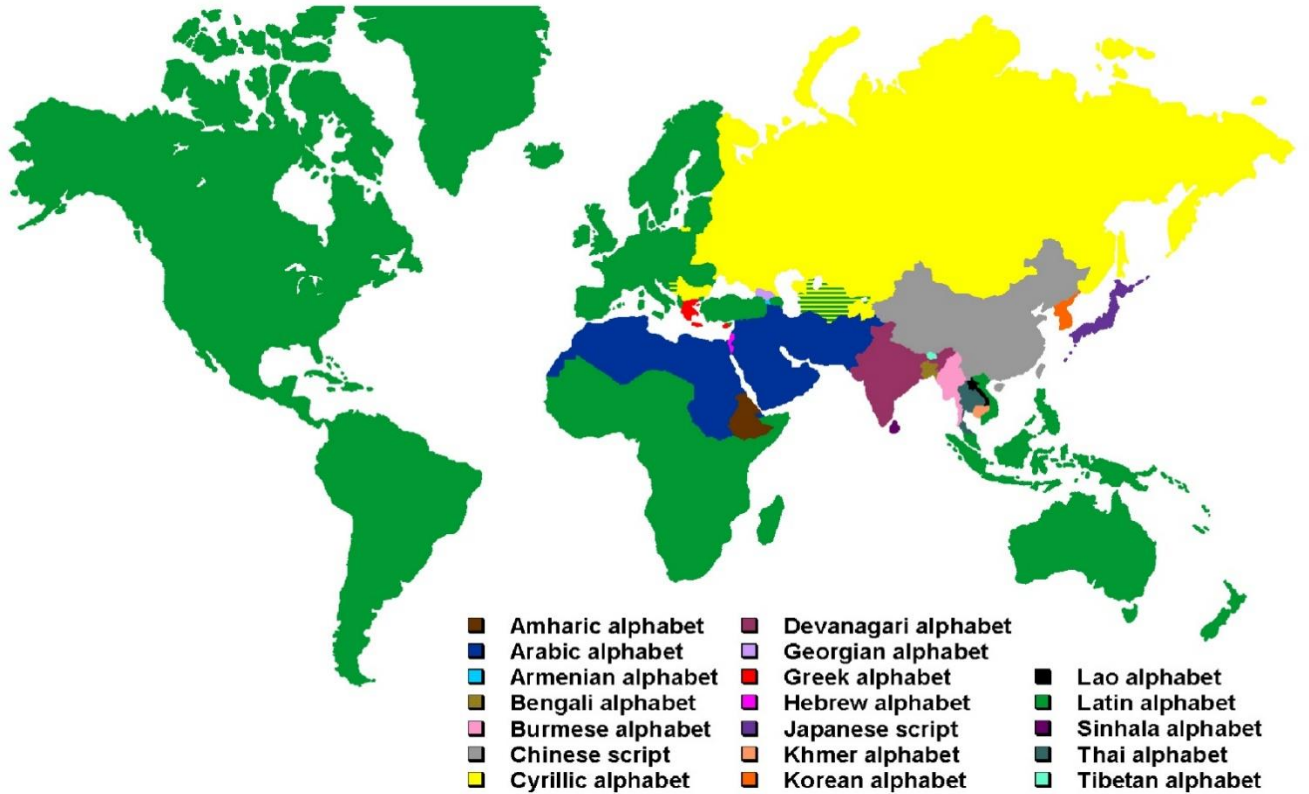


Fig. 3. Alphabets of the World. Courtesy of Conrad H. McGregor, 2013.

In order to understand how Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan reached the point of reforming their respective titular languages' alphabets, the reader will be provided with a brief history of alphabet reform within the context of these two countries. The author observes the distinction between the demonyms Kazakhstani and Kazakh. Kazakhstani is used to refer to anything relating to the state of Kazakhstan or its inhabitants, while Kazakh is used to refer to the language or someone who is ethnically Kazakh. For example, someone can be Kazakhstani (a resident of Kazakhstan), but not Kazakh (ethnically Kazakh heritage). The same distinction is made between Uzbekistani and Uzbek.

a. A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALPHABET REFORM: UZBEKISTAN AND KAZAKHSTAN

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have both experienced two periods of Latinization, one in the first half of the twentieth century and another following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Uzbekistan, initial deliberation on alphabet reform was in 1921 at the Uzbek Language and Orthography Congress. The Latin alphabet was proposed as an alternative to the Arabic alphabet, which had

been used until that point to write Uzbek.⁷ The rationale behind this transition will be discussed below. The Baku Turkological Congress held in February, 1926 was possibly the most important event for the Central Asian countries' decision to transition to the Latin alphabet. The event was attended by representatives from several Turkic-speaking countries including Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

It was at this congress that the Turkic-speaking nations of the USSR, as well as Turkey, made the decision to transition to the Latin alphabet.⁸ Following several years of preparation, in January, 1928 the Central Executive Committee of Uzbekistan ("UZCEC") started introducing the Latin alphabet into Uzbekistani society. By June, 1931 the alphabet reform of the Uzbek language from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet was declared completed.⁹ Uzbekistan used the Latin alphabet for merely ten years before the Soviet Union, under Joseph Stalin's regime, forced a second alphabet reform in 1940, this time from the Latin to the Cyrillic alphabet.¹⁰

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the Uzbekistani parliament in 1993 passed the first law on Latinization. This legislation stated that the Uzbek language will abandon Cyrillic and transition to the Latin alphabet prior to September 1, 2000.¹¹ This objective never materialized. In 1995 the Uzbekistani parliament introduced a new version of the Latin alphabet, modified from the one proposed in 1993, and extended the transition deadline from 2000 to 2005.¹² For multiple reasons discussed below, it will be argued that this 1995 alphabet revision effectively doomed any prospect of a swift and efficient transition for Uzbek.

In 2002 it was announced that the transition deadline would again be pushed forward, this time to 2010.¹³ Azerbaijan, another former Soviet Republic which commenced its alphabet transition at a similar time to Uzbekistan's, declared a completed transition to the Latin alphabet in 2001. Today,

⁷ Mehmet Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan Past and Present," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 20, no. 1 (2010): 50.

⁸ Артём Анатольевич Космарский, "Смыслы латинизации в Узбекистане (конец XX - начало XXI века)," *Вестник Евразии* 3 (2003): 64.

⁹ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 53.

¹⁰ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 56.

¹¹ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 57.

¹² Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

¹³ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

after almost three decades, Uzbekistan's alphabet reform has not been completed. In the educational sphere, students ought to learn the Uzbek Latin alphabet, yet many textbooks still use Uzbek Cyrillic. Signs and information relating to the tourism and entertainment sectors use the Latin alphabet, while most governmental work, including federal election campaigns, uses the Cyrillic alphabet. This has caused significant issues for public education. It has also created a generational divide, as young people are more familiar with the Latin alphabet while older members of society prefer Cyrillic.¹⁴

Kazakhstan's first period of Latinization unfolded in much the same way that Uzbekistan's did. The 1926 Baku Turkological Congress initiated several years of preparation for alphabet reform, followed by a declaration by the Central Executive Committee of Kazakhstan ("KzCEC") in December, 1928 that the Latin alphabet was to replace the Arabic alphabet the following year. This lasted until the Soviet-imposed transition to the Cyrillic alphabet in 1940.¹⁵

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, unlike Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan did not immediately move to transition to the Latin alphabet. This is likely due to the fact that at the time of independence, Kazakhstan's Slavic population exceeded 50% (primarily Russian), although that number had dropped to 34% by the 1999 census.¹⁶ Kazakhstani authorities were aware that alphabet reform was a sensitive subject among the Russian, Cyrillic-using population, and sought to avoid inviting threats from Russian nationalists or even the possibility of Russia annexing Kazakhstani territory.¹⁷ The prominent Kazakh linguist Abduali Kaidar wrote an open letter to the Kazakhstani presidential administration in 1993 requesting research into Latinizing. His request was denied.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ryan Michael Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition in Uzbekistan: Political Implications and Influences on Uzbek Identity," *Central Asia Program*, no. 231 (2020): 4-7.

¹⁵ Gaukhar Batyrbekkyzy, Tursun Khazretali Mahanuly, Murat Meirbekovich Tastanbekov, Lazat Sarsenbekovna Dinashveva, Barshagul Kashkynovna Issabek, and Gulzhan Dauletbekovna Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet History and Prospects," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 14, no. 1 (2018): 126-127.

¹⁶ Jacob M. Landau, "Alphabet Reform in the Six Independent Ex-Soviet Muslim Republics," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 20, no. 1 (2010): 28.

¹⁷ Lyazzat Kimanova, "Analysis of Arguments in the Public Debate on the Alphabet Change in Bilingual Kazakhstan," *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 10, no. 3 (2011): 1024.

¹⁸ Valentina Michelotti, "Переходное время: Alphabet Reform and Identity Politics in Modern Kazakhstan," *Al-Farabi* 54, no. 2 (2016): 65.

Cyrillic remained the alphabet of the Kazakh language until dialogue re-opened in 2006. At that time the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the need to examine the possibility of alphabet reform, sparking further discussions on Latinizing the Kazakh language.¹⁹ However, little action was taken until 2012 when President Nazarbayev definitively expressed his intention to shift to the Latin alphabet.

Nazarbayev called for the development of a language reform schedule which could commence implementation by the end of 2017.²⁰ In April, 2017 an article was published by the President concerning the development of Kazakhstan. It was entitled “Spiritual Renaissance” (*Рухани Жаңғыру*), and in this text he announced the initiation of the alphabet reform process. In October of the same year, a multi-step plan for transitioning to the Latin alphabet was released with 2025 as the completion deadline.²¹

Concurrently, President Nazarbayev approved a new version of the Kazakh Latin alphabet, amended from the one that had been proposed in September. This October version lasted until February, 2018 when it was replaced with yet another newly designed Latin alphabet. In October, 2019 recently-elected President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev expressed dissatisfaction with the current version of the Latin alphabet, reflecting the concern of academics who have raised serious questions regarding the alphabet’s linguistic viability.²² Another replacement version was presented in November, 2019, though it remains unclear which one will eventually be adopted. Kazakhstan’s transition from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet is an ongoing political, economic and social affair. This section has provided historical context regarding the issue of alphabet reform for the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The issue is contentious and often highly politicized. The following sections denote the structure of this thesis, review relevant secondary literature, and explicate the methodological processes which underpin this study.

¹⁹ Kimanova, “Analysis of Arguments,” 1021.

²⁰ Aigerim Bulambayeva, “Kazakhstan to Switch to Latin Alphabet by 2025,” The Astana Times, October 31, 2017, <https://astanatimes.com/2017/10/kazakhstan-to-switch-to-latin-alphabet-by-2025/>.

²¹ Кенже Татиля, и Рустем Кадыржанов “Казахская латиница: какой ей быть?” Central Asia Monitor, 29 января 2020 года, <https://samonitor.kz/34076-kazahskaya-latinica-kako-ey-byt.html>.

²² Жандос Темиргали, “Нельзя упустить этот шанс!” Финишная прямая выбора казахской латиницы,” www.forbes.kz, 31 октября 2019 года, https://forbes.kz/process/expertise/finishnaya_pryamaya_vyibora_kazahskoy_latinityi/.

b. AIMS AND THESIS STRUCTURE

State-based alphabet reform is a complicated and intricate process. For a nation, it has proven one of the hardest tasks in recent times to successfully propose, implement, control, monitor, and maintain.²³ Any number of things could go awry during the alphabet reform process, at many different levels, that may prove detrimental to a nation and its society farther down the line. Uzbekistan's apparent failure has proven this. In short, reform is difficult. It is a risk.

This thesis aims to define and examine the major factors that may influence the likelihood that Kazakhstan will have a more successful alphabet reform than Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's history of alphabet reform is taken as a case study to contextualize the current status of Kazakhstan's Latinization. Based on the cases of alphabet reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (both historic and modern), there are four emergent factors that can be analyzed to better gauge the chances of a reform's success. The factors are public opinion, education, politics, and linguistics, and their consideration supports this analysis. The breadth of these concepts allows us to undertake a comparative study between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and then focus on the more specific issues within the Kazakhstani context.

A survey was created by the author to gather information on Kazakhstan's alphabet reform from Kazakh speakers and residents of Kazakhstan. Seventy-five respondents provided their opinions, experience, and information regarding Kazakhstan's switch to the Latin alphabet. This information is analyzed and combined with relevant secondary literature in order to provide a summary of the major subfactors present during Kazakhstan's transition. Assessing these factors will provide insight on what can be improved in order to ensure a smooth and relatively painless transition for Kazakhstani residents to the Latin alphabet.

The literature review will provide the reader with an overview of the relevant theme of national identity, as well as an explanation on how officials specifically chose the Latin alphabet. The last section of the literature review consists of a brief introduction to the key reform factors analyzed in the results and discussion section. The section concerning methodology will explain the process leading to the decision to gather data using an online survey, in addition to summarizing the various

²³ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 49.

sections of survey questions. There are five results and discussion sections, corresponding to each one of the previously mentioned major reform factors, plus the auxiliary section of Uzbekistan / Other Nations. Concluding remarks will summarize the findings of this thesis and present prospects and future directions for studies in the areas of Kazakh and Uzbek alphabet reform. Finally, the appendix contains both the English and Russian versions of the survey that was used to gather data.

c. LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated above, significant infrastructural, economic and political commitments are involved with the process of reform. A ‘successful’ alphabet transition is loosely defined by Kadyrzhанov as being based on the time span in which a society uses two alphabets simultaneously during the transitional period,²⁴ also known as diachronic digraphia. This definition is favored because it allows us to measure *degrees of success* with respect to alphabet reform. Otherwise, a nation could, for example, take fifty years to complete a reform and have it deemed a ‘success’ due to its eventual completion. Diachronic digraphia as a basic measure of success can be seen as the starting point of this analysis.

Many experts and media sources consider Uzbekistan’s transition to the Latin alphabet to be unsuccessful.²⁵ It is approaching 30 years since the reform policies commenced, and the conversion remains incomplete.²⁶ Uzbekistan’s alphabet reform process can be studied in order to ascertain where it deviated from its intended plan and goals. Such a study can propose suggestions as to how future countries attempting alphabet reform can avoid this ‘failure’.

This review of relevant secondary literature will contextualize the need to analyze alphabet reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Two recurring themes are present: national identity and choice of alphabet. The final section will examine the key alphabet reform factors present in the literature, which serve as the basis for the data used.

²⁴ Рустем К. Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу в обществе массовой грамотности узбекистана,” *Аль-Фараби* 61, № 1 (2018): 99.

²⁵ Космарский, “Смыслы латинизации,” 69; Рустем К. Кадыржанов, “Выбор алфавита - выбор идентичности,” *Известия НАН РК, общественных наук*, 5 (2009): 108; Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 99; N. A. Kobzeva, and A. A. Trubachev, “Kazakh Language Modernization – from Cyrillic to Latin,” In *Тэарэтычныя і прыкладныя аспекты этналагічных даследаванняў: зборнік навуковых артыкулаў*, ed. by M. B. Макарыч (Мінск, Мінская вобласць: Беларускі нацыянальны тэхнічны ўніверсітэт, 2019), 370.

²⁶ Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 101.

i. National Identity

Kazakhstan's choice of a new alphabet is directly tied to its geopolitical identity and can be examined from several different viewpoints. This statement is attested by Batyrbekkyzy et al. who propose that the main argument for Kazakhstan's alphabet switch is that it is needed to strengthen its national identity.²⁷ This stems from the fact that, following the collapse of the USSR, it would have been difficult for Kazakhstan's government and citizens to build identities using only mono-ethnic Kazakh characteristics as they possessed a Russian majority.²⁸

Kazakhstan currently has several avenues to explore in terms of constructing a national identity. Michelotti asserts that Kazakhstan has in historical terms been geographically and culturally centered between east and west.²⁹ Within these two vastly different regions is contained the more specific areas of Russian/Slavic culture and Turkic culture. Turkic culture includes Turkey and the other Central Asian republics of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.³⁰ Kimanova states that those in favor of the Latin alphabet are, among other things, also expressing their preference for directing Kazakhstan's national identity more towards the Turkic world,³¹ while Michelotti puts forth that globalization and westernization are more pronounced cultural directions than one associated largely with the Turkic world.³²

Kadyrzhanov makes his opinion clear that Cyrillic is a choice for Russia's cultural sphere of influence, believing that Kazakhstan is currently experiencing Russification as demonstrated by the large number of Russian speakers residing there and the use of the Russian language at all levels of education.³³ According to Kadyrzhanov, it is a question of whether Turkic or Russian identity better defines Kazakhstan's national identity,³⁴ implying that Kazakhstan should make its choice based not on which identity is better in general, but rather which one better complements Kazakhstan's own sociopolitical image.

²⁷ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 131.

²⁸ Michelotti, "Переходное время," 64.

²⁹ Michelotti, "Переходное время," 58.

³⁰ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 25.

³¹ Kimanova, "Analysis of Arguments," 1024.

³² Michelotti, "Переходное время," 67.

³³ Кадыржанов, "Выбор алфавита," 98.

³⁴ Кадыржанов, "Выбор алфавита," 97.

Similarly, Uzbekistan sought to reimagine its national identity following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Levin argues that the formation of Uzbekistan's national identity immediately after the USSR can be looked at in terms of a four-fold model which illustrates the various cultural forces pulling at the country.³⁵ This model consists of the following categories: Europeanization from above, Europeanization from below, nativism from above, and nativism from below.³⁶ Levin demonstrates that Uzbekistan stands out most in the category of 'nativism from above', as this usually means that there is an indigenous elite who spear-heads the advancement of national identity after fighting for and gaining independence.³⁷

Uzbekistan, however, has not experienced an explicit struggle for independence and its elites were taught through the prism of Russian and European culture. For this reason, Uzbekistani President at the time, Islam Karimov, created several programs to try to 'reinststate' Uzbek culture, one of the results of which was beginning the process of Latinization.³⁸ Uzman concurs by acknowledging that language (including one's alphabet) is perceived by Turkic peoples as a vitally important factor not only in the development and progress of their country, but also for the construction of a national identity.³⁹

This concept of carefully selecting an alphabet to enable identity construction was previously used in Uzbekistan by the Bolsheviks shortly after the formation of the USSR. The Bolsheviks attempted and succeeded in Latinizing Uzbekistan's alphabet from the Arabic alphabet in an attempt to break Uzbekistan's religious ties with the Muslim world.⁴⁰ The effects of this cultural split from the Muslim world through alphabet reform have had a lasting impact on Uzbekistan, as Landau remarks that religion in general in Central Asian Republics is not a strong factor in nation building as a direct result of the USSR.⁴¹

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan face similar hurdles in terms of constructing their national identities. Both nations are attempting to devise a national identity as Turkic countries who were formerly

³⁵ Theodore Levin, "The Reterritorialization of Culture in the New Central Asian States: A Report from Uzbekistan," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 25 (1993): 52.

³⁶ Levin, "The Reterritorialization of Culture," 52.

³⁷ Levin, "The Reterritorialization of Culture," 54.

³⁸ Levin, "The Reterritorialization of Culture," 55.

³⁹ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 50.

⁴⁰ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan", 51.

⁴¹ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 25.

part of the Soviet Union, and which have undergone the process of Russification. Kadyrzhanov states that the position of the Kazakh intelligentsia is that the Latin alphabet will bring Turkic countries closer together and will also free Kazakhstan from Russian influence, facilitating the formation of an independent national identity.⁴² It can be assumed that the Uzbek elites agree with this position as they began immediately distancing themselves with language policy and alphabet reform immediately following the collapse of the USSR.

In terms of Turkic identity, both countries originally expressed interest in following this cultural path by attending several conferences held in Turkey in the 1990s. At this conference, the creation of a pan-Turkic Latin alphabet for all Turkic countries was proposed. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, however, backtracked on their interest in a pan-Turkic community through alphabet reform, having both initiated the creation of their own version of the Latin alphabet in order to strengthen their independent national identities.⁴³ Tajibaeva & Kozyrev assert that a country's alphabet choice is their civilizational future,⁴⁴ implying that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have voted in favor of strong and distinct national identities moving forward. To a lesser extent, Turkic identity also becomes relevant as comparisons may be drawn with Turkey's historical Latinization.

ii. Alphabet Choice

In the past one hundred years, both for Soviet alphabet reform and modern alphabet reform in Central Asia, three distinctly different alphabets have been considered to some degree: the Arabic, Cyrillic, and Latin alphabets. This section will examine the secondary literature on each alphabet in order to better demonstrate the rationale and arguments that have led both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to settle on the Latin alphabet.

The Arabic alphabet was used as the standard script for the Kazakh language until 1929,⁴⁵ and as the standard script for the Uzbek language until 1929 as well.⁴⁶ At that time, several factors were present when determining to abandon the Arabic alphabet in favor of the Latin one. Batyrbekkyzy et al. note how the Latinization of Turkic languages in the 1920s for Turkic peoples symbolized

⁴² Кадыржанов, "Выбор алфавита," 104.

⁴³ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 27.

⁴⁴ Saule Tajibaeva, and Timur Kozyrev, "Statehood, Language, and Alphabet: a Kazakhstan Case Study," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 46, no. 4 (2007): 150.

⁴⁵ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 127.

⁴⁶ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 53.

European Art Nouveau and therefore a greater connection with the west, whereas the Arabic alphabet was associated with “the Quran and camels”.⁴⁷ Soviet leaders apparently held similar notions, as many scholars who study USSR language transformation argue that the Soviet government was in favor of Latinization to distance Turkic peoples from Middle Eastern Islamic countries.⁴⁸ The preference for the Arabic alphabet in terms of late twentieth and early twenty-first century alphabet reform is predominately supported by smaller groups. Michelotti details in her interviews with Kazakhstani citizens that a modest minority of young ethnic Kazakhs are in favor of reinstalling the Arabic alphabet, adding that these are conservative Muslims inspired by religion.⁴⁹

Kosmarskij has observed a similar trend concerning Uzbekistan. A rejection of Cyrillic and re-adoption of Arabic could present a return to Muslim values,⁵⁰ however this course of action is supported only by a minority of Uzbekistanis.⁵¹ On the other hand, those advocating for retaining the Cyrillic alphabet often argue that it is a question of ethnic identity and cultural heritage. Kimanova gives a brief history of the pressure that the Kazakhstani government has faced by its large Russophone population to keep the official status of the Russian language almost on par with that of Kazakh.⁵² It is also pointed out that minorities have stated that both Russian and Cyrillic serve as a ‘bridge’ between nationalities.⁵³ Kazakhstan has attempted to maintain this ‘bridge’ in order to avoid interethnic conflict.⁵⁴ Regarding Uzbekistan, Landau raises the issue that switching only Uzbek to the Latin alphabet would leave minority groups with two alphabets, Latin for the country’s titular language and Cyrillic for minority languages; this has caused spokesmen of ethnic minorities to raise concerns about the alphabet switch.⁵⁵ Cultural heritage is of concern primarily within the context of literature. As over 90% of existing Kazakh literature is in Cyrillic,⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinashva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, “Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet,” 127.

⁴⁸ Kimanova, “Analysis of Arguments,” 1023; Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinashva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, “Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet,” 133; Kobzeva, and Trubachev, “Kazakh Language Modernization,” 370.

⁴⁹ Michelotti, “Переходное время,” 68.

⁵⁰ Космарский, “Смыслы латинизации,” 66.

⁵¹ Космарский, “Смыслы латинизации,” 68.

⁵² Kimanova, “Analysis of Arguments,” 1025.

⁵³ Kimanova, “Analysis of Arguments,” 1025.

⁵⁴ Kimanova, “Analysis of Arguments,” 1025.

⁵⁵ Landau, “Alphabet Reform,” 31.

⁵⁶ Michelotti, “Переходное время,” 68.

academics warn that Kazakhstan should avoid making the same mistake that Uzbekistan did when they failed to transliterate a significant portion of their literature into the Latin alphabet.⁵⁷

Several reasons have been provided for abandoning the use of Cyrillic as the alphabet of choice specifically for Kazakhstan. Both Michelotti and Batyrbekkyzy et al. believe that the continued use of Cyrillic is a hindrance to Kazakhstan's formation of a national identity.⁵⁸ Batyrbekkyzy et al. state further that Cyrillic, for Kazakhstan, is a mark of its colonial past as it was not a free choice of the people, but rather imposed by a totalitarian state.⁵⁹ It is also noted that the Kazakh Cyrillic alphabet contains 42 letters while the Latin version of the alphabet will have no more than 33 letters, making it more efficient.⁶⁰ This theme will be explored further below.

While those encouraging the continued use of Cyrillic make valid arguments, the supporters of Latinization have triumphed in the alphabetic tug-of-war. There are three key points in favor of Latinization that many sources agree on. Firstly, it is argued that the Latin alphabet has a universal cosmopolitan character which would allow Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to better and more quickly integrate into the global community.⁶¹ Secondly, switching to the Latin alphabet is an essential step towards integrating into the global world of internet and information networks as the Latin alphabet is more compatible with technology and computer programs.⁶² Thirdly, successful Latinization would more easily facilitate the learning of English and other languages worldwide which use the Latin alphabet.⁶³

Kosmarskij also proposes the interesting idea that it may be psychologically easier for Russian-speaking students to learn and perceive Uzbek (and by extension Kazakh) in the Latin alphabet as

⁵⁷ Кадыржанов, "Выбор алфавита," 102.

⁵⁸ Michelotti, "Переходное время," 58; Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 131.

⁵⁹ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 132.

⁶⁰ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 129.

⁶¹ Tajibaeva, and Kozyrev, "Statehood, Language, and Alphabet," 150; Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 129; Зауреш Нуркенова Нурлигенова, и Анастасия Станиславовна Лим, "Переход на латиницу в Республике Казахстан - требование времени," в *Образовательная система: структурные преобразования и перспективные направления развития научной мысли*, под общ. ред. С. В. Кузьмина (Казань, Республика Татарстан: ООО "СитИвент", 2019), 56.

⁶² Michelotti, "Переходное время," 58; Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 133; Нурлигенова, и Лим, "Переход на латиницу," 57.

⁶³ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 32; Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, "Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet," 129; Нурлигенова, и Лим, "Переход на латиницу," 57.

it highlights the ‘otherness’ of the language,⁶⁴ allowing students to better mentally compartmentalize the two languages. In terms of national identity, Michelotti draws on the results of her interviews in Kazakhstan to indicate that young Kazakh academics believe the Latin alphabet would develop Kazakhstan’s language and culture by improving Kazakh’s functionality in academia.⁶⁵ Finally, many sources agree that switching to the Latin alphabet will help to unite ethnic Kazakhs living abroad by giving them a common alphabet and making the Kazakh language more accessible to those not familiar with Cyrillic.⁶⁶

Most sources have a relatively positive view on transitioning to the Latin alphabet; however, they do not hesitate to indicate the negative effects that alphabet reform can potentially have on Uzbekistani and Kazakhstani society. Batyrbekkyzy et al. argue that the effect of alphabet change on different generations should not be downplayed, noting that the younger generation might not have access to previous written history if they are not able to read the former alphabet.⁶⁷ Kadyrzhanov examines the generational issue from a different angle, asserting that illiteracy might be possible among the *older* generation if they are unable to adapt to the new alphabet.⁶⁸

The same author, though, almost renders this a moot point by stating that it can be assumed that a portion of the population will not be able to master the new alphabet, and that this is simply a cost of any alphabet reform.⁶⁹ Michelotti has deduced from interviews with older ethnic Kazakhs that they are less flexible than the younger generation and this causes a fear of being cut off in administrative and professional capacities due to alphabet reform.⁷⁰

Another ‘issue’ that Kazakhstan will have to surmount is the nation’s high level of literacy. At the Turkological Conference in Baku in 1926, Professor N.F. Yakovlev warned:

⁶⁴ Космарский, “Смыслы латинизации,” 75.

⁶⁵ Michelotti, “Переходное время,” 68.

⁶⁶ Кадыржанов, “Выбор алфавита,” 102; Michelotti, “Переходное время,” 68; Kobzeva, and Trubachev, “Kazakh Language Modernization,” 371.

⁶⁷ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinashева, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, “Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet,” 132.

⁶⁸ Кадыржанов, “Выбор алфавита,” 104.

⁶⁹ Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 105.

⁷⁰ Michelotti, “Переходное время,” 68.

“the ease of the Latin alphabet introduction is inversely proportional to the development of national literature, that is, the more literacy before the introduction of the Latin alphabet, the harder it is to introduce the Latin alphabet”⁷¹

Kadyrzhanov supports this with his assertion that Uzbekistan and other Turkic countries (i.e. Kazakhstan) are experiencing problems by trying to make alphabet reform happen in a society of mass literacy which is based on Cyrillic.⁷² During Uzbekistan’s first period of Latinization they were able to implement literacy campaigns which increased their number of literate citizens from 164,000 persons to over two million,⁷³ inadvertently sabotaging the nation, to some degree, for future alphabet reform. Kazakhstan will have to develop and implement a strategy in order to relatively quickly transition their highly literate society from one alphabet to another.

iii. Relevant Reform Factors

This section will provide a brief overview of the factors upon which the thesis data that has been collected, and described below, is based. It has been determined that the relevant reform factors are public opinion, education, politics, and linguistics. Landau corroborates this selection of factors, stating that popular support is necessary for alphabet reform (public opinion), that there must be a dedicated national leader with authority (politics), and that there is discussion regarding which alphabet is most suitable for the language being reformed (linguistics).⁷⁴

Education is addressed, as practically speaking, it is not possible to successfully complete an alphabet reform without re-educating the general population in the use of the new alphabet. Each of these major alphabet reform factors can be further subdivided, and of course it is important to recognize the potential relationship between the concepts. For example, Kenzhekhanuly shows that economics are important for public opinion, as Uzbekistan’s worsening economic situation during the 1990s contributed heavily to a decline in public support for the reform.⁷⁵ Chsherbakov

⁷¹ Batyrbekkyzy, Mahanuly, Tastanbekov, Dinasheva, Issabek, Sugirbayeva, “Latinisation of Kazakh Alphabet,” 129.

⁷² Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 104.

⁷³ Uzman, “Romanisation in Uzbekistan,” 53.

⁷⁴ Landau, “Alphabet Reform,” 32.

⁷⁵ Rauan Kenzhekhanuly, “Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms in Central Asia,” in *Languages in a Global World: Learning for Better Cultural Understanding*, ed. Bruno della Chiesa, Jessica Scott, and Christina Hinton (Paris, Île-de-France: OECD Publishing, 2012), 141.

proceeds in a different direction, asserting that public support is accrued not with concrete economic factors, but with transparency on the part of the government.⁷⁶

With the case of Kazakhstan, Chsherbakov also argues that the real reason for alphabet reform is de-Russification, which the government declines to directly confirm.⁷⁷ Dietrich lends support to Chsherbakov's argument by describing the complicated geo-political situation of Kazakhstan's northern provinces; these regions encapsulate a large Russian minority that Russia may try to protect if it perceives the alphabet reform as attempting to marginalize ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan.⁷⁸ Schweitzer describes a similar scenario which hindered Uzbekistan's alphabet reform, as a political break with the United States in the mid-2000s opened the door for Russian views and influence on the benefits of retaining the Cyrillic alphabet.⁷⁹

Landau and Schweitzer collectively provide the best argument for ensuring that there is an effective plan to introduce a new alphabet into a country's education system. Landau details how proper preparation of teaching materials and their subsequent introduction into the Uzbekistani school system helped Uzbekistan quickly and successfully transition to the Latin alphabet in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁸⁰ This can be contrasted with Schweitzer's analysis of Uzbekistan's failure to provide Latin alphabet learning materials to all students during their current alphabet reform, forcing students to study in the Uzbek Cyrillic alphabet.⁸¹

Kenzhekhanuly argues that this lack of proper teaching materials has damaged the Uzbekistani education system.⁸² This reveals Uzbekistan's different approaches to alphabet reform and education during its first and second Latinization. Chsherbakov reinforces the notion that thorough education-planning is no less important at the early stages of Kazakhstan's alphabet reform, by

⁷⁶ Andrey Chsherbakov, "An Exercise in Argumentative Writing: Arguing Both Sides of an Issue," *NUGSE Research in Education* 2, no. 2 (2017): 32.

⁷⁷ Chsherbakov, "An Exercise in Argumentative Writing," 32.

⁷⁸ Ayse Dietrich, "Language Policy and Hegemony in the Turkic Republics," in *Language Planning in the Post-Communist Era The Struggles for Language Control in the New Order in Eastern Europe, Eurasia and China*, ed. Ernest Andrews (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 153-155.

⁷⁹ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 4.

⁸⁰ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 53.

⁸¹ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 5.

⁸² Kenzhekhanuly, "Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms," 141.

describing the myriad negative effects that Latinization could have on young people's literacy levels.⁸³

Chsherbakov and Kosmarskij paint a similar picture of the overall political milieu concerning Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's alphabet reforms. Both authors assert that the decision to transition to the Latin alphabet was not a democratic one, Chsherbakov affirming this fact for Kazakhstan⁸⁴ and Kosmarskij for Uzbekistan.⁸⁵ The government making the decision to implement a new alphabet without public consultation ought to imply that there is a plan to properly carry out the reform, but this is not always the case. Uzman provides evidence for this, pointing out poor decisions on the part of the Uzbekistani government such as extending the alphabet reform deadline multiple times and being more concerned with other political and social issues.⁸⁶ Schweitzer further indicates shortcomings on the part of Uzbekistani politicians in helping to complete Uzbekistan's alphabet reform, from poor financial planning to setting a bad example by continuing to use the old Uzbek Cyrillic alphabet on government paperwork.⁸⁷ As Kazakhstan's transition to the Latin alphabet is still in its beginning stages, it remains to be seen whether the recent political decisions by the Kazakhstani government will produce a comparable reform situation to that of Uzbekistan; this prospect will be evaluated further below.

Linguistically speaking, attempting to replace a language's Cyrillic alphabet with a flawed, or not properly considered, version of the Latin alphabet can produce more problems than if no reform had taken place at all. Uzman provides a checklist of principles to consider when developing a new alphabet.⁸⁸ Several of these principles were violated in the creation of Uzbekistan's 1995 version of the Latin alphabet, which is still used today. These principles will be explored in more detail in the linguistics section of the thesis.

Landau asserts that this is where Uzbekistan went wrong by introducing a poorly-developed Latin alphabet, thereby causing delays in the reform process.⁸⁹ This view is supported by Uzman and Kosmarskij who both argue that there are significant defects which are inherent to Uzbekistan's

⁸³ Chsherbakov, "An Exercise in Argumentative Writing," 34.

⁸⁴ Chsherbakov, "An Exercise in Argumentative Writing," 33.

⁸⁵ Космарский, "Смыслы латинизации," 66.

⁸⁶ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 59.

⁸⁷ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 5-6.

⁸⁸ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

⁸⁹ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 29.

current Latin alphabet.⁹⁰ Kenzhekhanuly reinforces the problematic nature of the alphabet by describing how one of Uzbekistan's minority languages attempted to use that same version of the alphabet, only to attain a similarly negative result.⁹¹ An explanation for this flawed alphabet is provided in part by Dietrich and Schweitzer who identify a political issue connected to relations between Uzbekistan and Turkey.⁹² This will be explained in further detail below.

This literature review has discussed and analyzed existing scholarly literature on the topic of alphabet reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in order to contextualize future research on the alphabet reforms of these two countries. Several subjects comprising identity construction, alphabet choice, and reform factor analysis have been given special attention, as these are the recurring themes within sources discussing Central Asian alphabet reform strategy. It has been demonstrated that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan possess ambiguous national identities, as these nations reside at a cultural crossroads between the Turkic and Russian/Slavic worlds. A third direction of national identity has arisen in the form of looking inward, rather than outward, to develop a national identity. This has been seen when each of the Central Asian Turkic Republics opted to create their own alphabet rather than a pan-Turkic one.

In terms of alphabet reform, the Latin alphabet is widely agreed upon to be the most viable choice of alphabet for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The Arabic alphabet was largely not considered in the planning process of modern alphabet reform, as in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan it was only supported by religious minority groups. Cyrillic was ultimately ruled out, although several valid arguments were presented for keeping it, such as that it serves as an interethnic alphabet, and that it is the alphabet of the majority of existing literature in the Kazakh and Uzbek languages.

Key factors used to examine the alphabet reforms of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been identified above. Public opinion of the alphabet reform is influenced by multiple sub-factors including economics and interethnic relations. Introduction of the new alphabet into the education system must be properly planned so as to make the transition as easy as possible for students, thereby avoiding Uzbekistan's current situation. Politically, neither Uzbekistan nor Kazakhstan's decision to transition alphabets was democratic, and multiple mistakes were made on the part of

⁹⁰ Космарский, "Смыслы латинизации," 68; Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

⁹¹ Kenzhekhanuly, "Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms," 141.

⁹² Dietrich, "Language Policy and Hegemony," 152; Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 4.

Uzbekistan's government during the transition process, which Kazakhstan may be able to avoid. As a final point, care must be taken to involve competent academics, linguists and scholars in the design process of the new alphabet. Having a flawed final version of the alphabet can eventually lead to serious complications.

d. METHODOLOGY

The author originally intended to travel to the Kazakhstani cities of Almaty and Nur-Sultan from April 4th-18th in order to interview experts in the field of Central Asian and alphabet reform studies, specifically relating to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Interviews were chosen as the preferred method of data collection, as Kazakhstan's alphabet reform is an ongoing event which is developing at a pace that would not have allowed the author to wait for more recent data and updates to be published. However, the trip was cancelled in mid-March due to the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.

Rather than in-person interviews, an online survey was created to gather as much relevant data as possible. The online survey was a viable medium to gather data of the kind that would have been available through personal interviews. The primary difference between the previously planned interviews and the online survey is the people involved with data collection. Face-to-face interviews would have been conducted mostly, if not completely, with experts. The online survey was made available to a broader range of individuals as well as experts. This facilitated the collection of more data and greatly increased the number of responses.

There were three criteria that would make a person eligible to participate, and at least one needed to be satisfied: 1. The respondent speaks Kazakh. 2. The respondent is a resident of Kazakhstan (for example non-Kazakh-speaking ethnic Russians living in Kazakhstan). 3. The respondent has specialized knowledge of Kazakh and Uzbek alphabet reform (for example non-Kazakh scholars). These conditions are focused enough to acquire specific information, but they also facilitate the acquisition of more generalized information. The majority of questions on the survey were open-ended, though many of them could also be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' response. This provided respondents the opportunity to share additional information including their opinions on issues related to Latinization, as well as first-hand insight on the progression of the alphabet reform from an agent actively experiencing it. This allowed the author to examine the factors associated with

alphabet reform from the perspectives of both experts and Kazakh-speakers/Kazakhstanis without specialized knowledge of the alphabet reform – factors which can be placed within the context of the analysis above.

The survey consisted of 52 questions, divided into five sections, four of which are based on the reform factors established above. The fifth section, titled Uzbekistan / Other Nations, was used as an auxiliary section to provide more information about Uzbekistan's alphabet reform which could be placed in a comparative light with Kazakhstan's. It was possible for some questions to fall under multiple sections, but these questions were placed in one single section that the author deemed most relevant. A complete list of both the English and Russian questions can be found in the Appendix.

Section 1 is entitled “General Questions / Public Opinion”. This section requests permission for the academic use of the respondent's data, asks for the respondent's basic personal information such as name, occupation, etc., and it establishes the linguistic abilities of the respondent. Questions concerning the personal sentiments of the respondent in relation to the Kazakh alphabet reform are also included here. Responses to these questions serve as the foundation of the dataset.

Section 2 is called “Education”. This section asks questions pertaining to multiple aspects of educating and training the Kazakhstani population to use the new alphabet. Questions asked address the ease of which university students and grade-schoolers will adapt to the new alphabet, the situation regarding the acquisition of learning materials in the new alphabet, and whether the government will provide working adults with Latin alphabet tutorials, for example. This information allows us to assess how efficient the reform process is, and how it impacts upon the different demographical layers of society. Furthermore, education is key to establishing intergenerational continuity of the new alphabet.

Section 3 is titled “Politics”, but could more accurately be called “Politics and Government”. This section asks for the respondent's views on whether the decision to transition to the Latin alphabet was a democratic one, whether economic hurdles are anticipated during the course of the reform, and how closely the government is expected to adhere to their original timeline. This section aims

to gather data on the public's confidence in the reform being completed in a timely and effective manner which matches the reform schedule and procedures previously announced by the government.

Section 4 is designated "Linguistics". The questions in this section are of a mostly socio-linguistic nature. Information was gathered on non-titular languages (for example, the minority language of Dungan) transitioning to the Cyrillic alphabet, the possible future proscription of the Cyrillic alphabet to force the use of Latin, and the impact of the pervasive use of Russian in Kazakhstan. The questions also concern the interaction of alphabet reform within the context of designing an alphabet which is well adapted to the language being transitioned.

Section 5 is called "Uzbekistan / Other Nations". This section asks for the respondent's views on Kazakhstan's alphabet reform in relation to the alphabet reform of other Turkic nations. A series of questions is posed, seeking the opinion of the respondent and information relating to Uzbekistan's alphabet reform. Whilst this section is especially relevant for respondents with specific expertise, insight into the reform process of Uzbekistan from the layman perspective has proven to be valuable.

Question #52 is outside the scope of the previously mentioned five sections, and simply asks the respondent if they have any final miscellaneous comments or questions for the author. Many of the respondents kindly expressed their well-wishes for the success of this thesis. The original questions were transferred into a Google Forms document to facilitate ease of sharing the survey, as well as submitting completed ones. The survey was shared with respondents using multiple channels. The survey was sent to many Kazakhstani citizens and Kazakh speakers using the database of Kazakh speakers available on italki.com, an online language-learning community. In Kazakhstan, the survey was circulated among the academic community by Professor Rustem Kadyrzhanov⁹³ who had been assisting the author in planning the research trip to Kazakhstan. In Nur-Sultan, Anar Fazylzhan⁹⁴ sent the survey to her professional contacts.

⁹³ Chief Research Associate, Institute of Philosophy, Political and Religious Studies, Committee for Science, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

⁹⁴ Secretary of Science for the National Scientific-Practical Center Til-Kazyna. This is a government center recently opened to coordinate interdepartmental work on the transition to the Latin alphabet.

Respondents were allowed two weeks to complete the survey and submit it. The responses from the survey can be analyzed to determine the impact of certain factors on Kazakhstan's alphabet reform. This data will be combined with secondary research in order to provide both background information on the subject, and also to establish a framework for the data that some of the questions produce. For example, one of the questions asks the respondent their opinion of the various versions of the Kazakh Latin alphabet, which is a subject that has already been addressed in multiple peer-reviewed articles.

The survey questions provide on-the-ground perspectives of experts and laymen alike, organized under the purview of the previously stated factors of public opinion, education, politics, and linguistics. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data was collected. The quantitative data was subject to a statistical analysis. These numerical indicators can be thought of as checkpoints or snapshots of where Kazakhstan is currently at in its process of Latinization. Charting will be provided where the author has deemed it useful to represent data in that medium,⁹⁵ or where the responses reveal trends of particular statistical significance. Qualitative data in the form of respondents' comments and opinions provides a different perspective on the same factors. Comments were largely selected for their variety in representing various viewpoints and sentiments associated with a specific issue. More weight was given to the comments provided by experts who took the survey. This combination of data was then compared against secondary literature available on Uzbekistan's ongoing alphabet reform to demonstrate whether Kazakhstan is faring better or worse than Uzbekistan, thereby influencing the likelihood that its transition will be more successful.

i. Limitations of the Study

The author created the original English version of the survey, which was then translated into Russian by a Kazakhstani teacher of Kazakh, English, and Russian. Whilst the author possesses an advanced level of Russian, it was considered desirable for the translation to be completed by a native speaker. It was possible to also commission a Kazakh-language translation of the survey, though this was decided against. This way, the author was able to personally review the Russian questions to ensure that all subtleties of the English questions were captured in the translation.

⁹⁵ For example, when representing complex data such as the measurement of a person's individual language abilities.

This proved prudent, as several questions did require adjustment, as a result of complications caused by the nature of the Russian language itself.

For example, question #22 was added because of the lexical difference between the words ‘student’ and *студент* (student).⁹⁶ Though spelled and pronounced almost the same, ‘student’ in American English refers to any person at an educational institution, whereas *студент* refers specifically to higher education learners. Therefore, question #22 introduced the words ‘grade-schooler’ and *школьник*, which both mean ‘pupil’.⁹⁷

Ironically, individuals who solely communicate in Kazakh were unable to take the survey. The author concluded that a Russian-only version would be sufficient, as 97% of Kazakhstan’s population is proficient in Russian.⁹⁸ The author attempted to compromise by adding a note to the Russian version of the survey, indicating that respondents could write their answers in Kazakh if it was more comfortable for them. Two respondents wrote their answers entirely in Kazakh, which the author then had translated to English by a native Kazakh speaker. A further limitation, or comment, concerning the study is that a large number of respondents were part of the academic community in Kazakhstan. This should be taken into account when considering the data and results that it produces.

⁹⁶ Question #22: Do you believe the transition to the new alphabet will go smoothly for grade-schoolers (ages 5-18)?
Считаете ли вы, что переход к новому алфавиту благополучно пройдет для школьников?

⁹⁷ Originally question #21 was: Do you believe the transition to the new alphabet will go smoothly for students?
Считаете ли вы, что переход к новому алфавиту благополучно пройдет для студентов?

⁹⁸ American Councils Editorial Staff, “The State of Language in Kazakhstan,” American Councils, August 11, 2015, <https://www.americancouncils.org/news/across-globe/state-language-kazakhstan>.

II. SURVEY RESPONDENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section will serve as an introduction to the survey results by providing the reader with the respondents' answers to the first ten questions of the survey. The first ten questions established the respondents' background, taking into account factors such as occupation, age, ethnicity, linguistic ability, and personal language policy. For the purposes of referring to respondents' personal testimony while also maintaining their anonymity, initials have been assigned to each respondent based on the name written on their completed survey. If a respondent only wrote one name, then an X was used for the second initial. In order to avoid digraphs in English, Cyrillic letters such as Ж or Я are transliterated as "Z" and "Y" respectively. Cyrillic X is transliterated as Latin "H." If initials repeated then a numeral was added to the repeating set of initials.⁹⁹ Where percentages are provided, they are in relation to the number of respondents who answered that question, not the number of respondents overall. The number of responses received, corresponding to each question that yields statistical results, can be found in the appendix. Two respondents with specialized linguistic knowledge, Rustem Kadyrzhanov and Kuatbek Duisenov, gave permission for their names to be publicly used. For respondents referred to with initials, gender neutral pronouns "they" and "them" will be used.

Of the respondents that provided their occupation, student was the most commonly answered (43%), followed by teacher or professor (13%), linguist (6%), and various other professions including economist, analyst, journalist, and waiter, for example (38%). Several professors in Kazakhstan made the survey available to their classes which explains the high percentage of student respondents, and general academic connections provided for a high rate of teacher responses. Linguist is the third most represented group, due to the survey's subject matter with multiple people in this profession circulating it amongst their academic networks.

Regarding age, respondents under the age of 25 made up the largest group (51%), followed by ages 26-50 (33%), and respondents over 51 constituted the smallest group (16%). The youngest age listed by a respondent was 17, and the oldest was 69. The low average age of respondents is again reflected in the fact that the survey was made available to several classes of university students.

⁹⁹ For example, GX and GX1 are two different respondents.

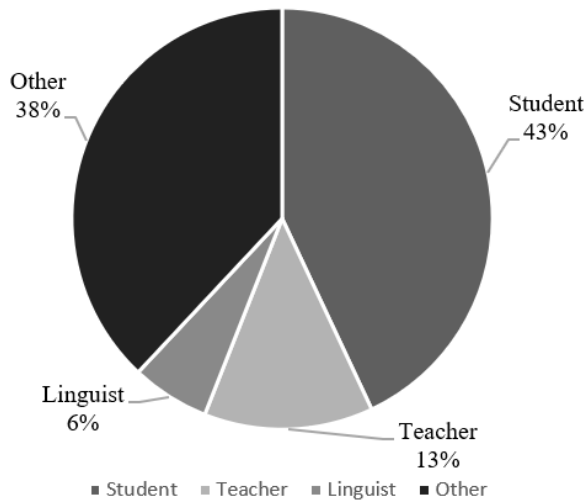


Fig. 4. Respondent Occupations.

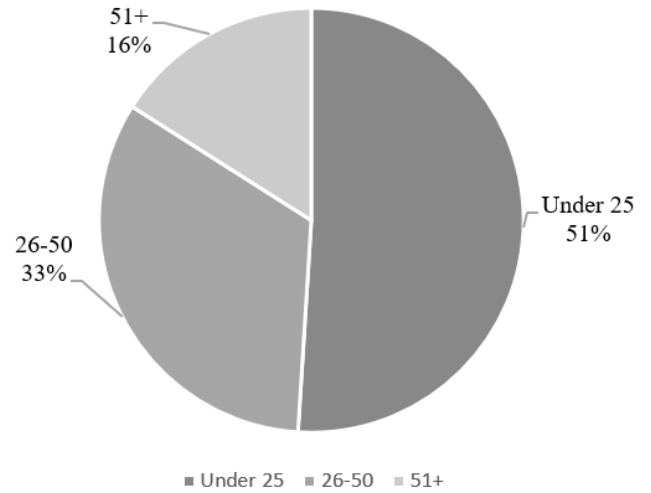


Fig. 5. Age of Survey Respondents.

The vast majority of respondents were from Kazakhstan (97%), with the remainder being from Turkmenistan, Mongolia, and Poland (1% each). Within Kazakhstan, Almaty was most commonly answered (48%), followed by Oskemen (Усть-Каменогорск) (12%), the capital Nur-Sultan (6%), Shymkent (5%), and the various other cities in multiple regions of Kazakhstan (29%).

Given the option to provide their ethnicity, the majority of respondents expectedly answered Kazakh (82%), followed by Russian (8%), Tatar (3%), Polish (3%), and various other ethnicities including Belorussian, German, and Turkish, for example (1.4% each). When asked what their native language is, the majority of respondents answered Kazakh (80%), followed by Russian (28%), and several other languages including Mongolian, Turkmen, Polish, etc. (1.3% each). 11% of respondents listed both Russian and Kazakh as their native languages.

In addition to asking respondents to provide their native language, they were also asked why they consider that language to be their native one. The responses received for this second part of the question show that determining the native language of a Kazakhstani is more complicated than it first appears. BB answered that their native language is Kazakh, but said that in daily life they exclusively use Russian, indicating that they may in fact know Russian better than their native language of Kazakh. This was the case for AK, who said that ethnically their native language is Kazakh, but that it is more convenient for them to speak, write, and think in Russian. AK says that they consider themselves to have two native languages: Kazakh and Russian. These comments show that Kazakhstanis do not base their native language solely on what they grew up with in their

home, but also on what has become more comfortable to use in daily life (often Russian), and in terms of how they reflect upon their own personal identity.

The majority of respondents reported that the primary language of instruction when they were attending school was Russian (51%), followed by Kazakh (45%), English (2%), and Mongolian and Polish (1% each). A small number of respondents listed both Russian and Kazakh as the language that they were formally educated in (5%). AX3 offers an explanation for the latter category, writing that from the first to the fifth grade they studied in Russian, but from the fifth grade onwards they studied in Kazakh.

When asked to list the languages which they speak, almost every respondent answered that they speak Russian (99%), followed by Kazakh (92%), then English (73%), Turkish (17%), German (7%), and Chinese (5%). Other languages listed by a small number of participants include French, Japanese, Polish, and Mongolian.

Respondents were also asked to rate the level of the languages which they speak on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most competent). 99% of respondents indicated some competency in Russian, 92% in Kazakh and 73% in English. Below are the results for Russian, Kazakh, and English:

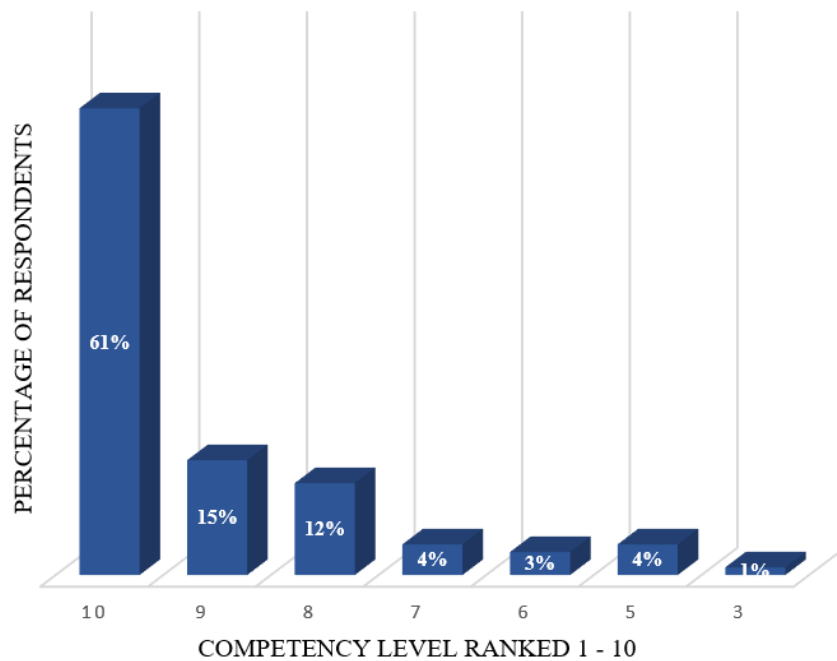


Fig. 6. Russian Language Competency of Respondents.

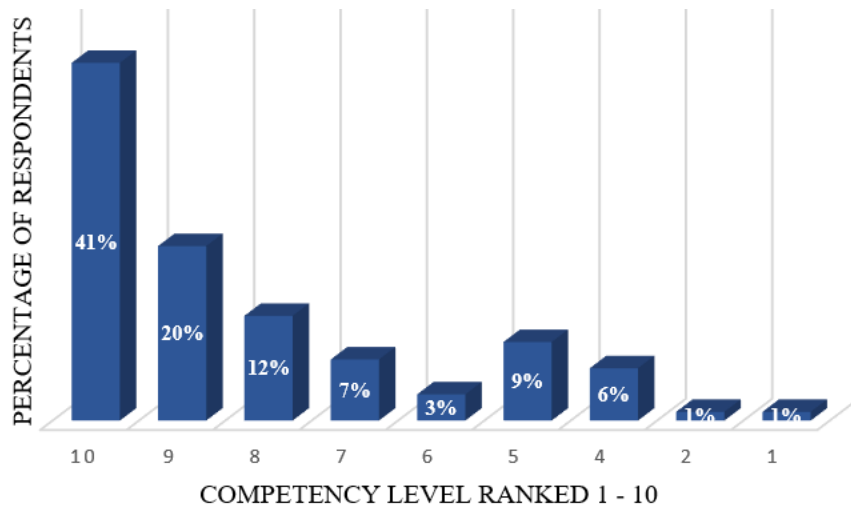


Fig. 7. Kazakh Language Competency of Respondents.

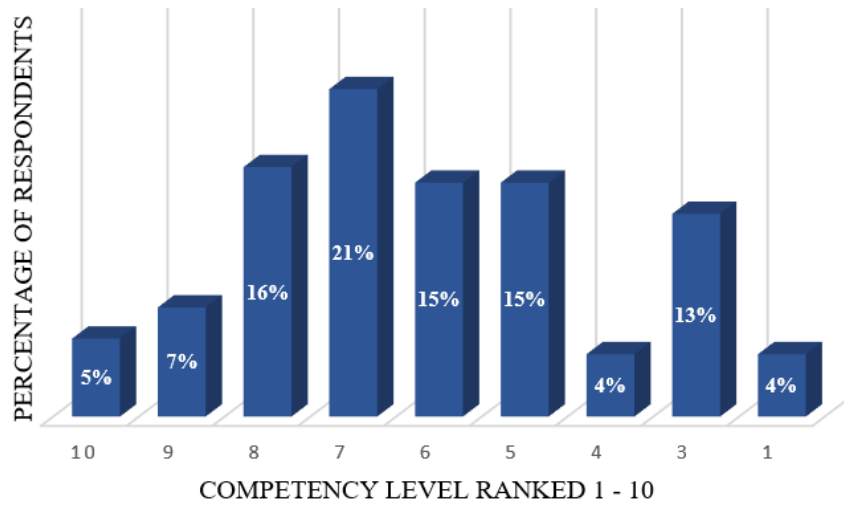


Fig. 8. English Language Competency of Respondents.

When examining the foreign languages that respondents studied at either school or university, it quickly becomes apparent why so many report at least some knowledge of English. English was studied by the majority of respondents as a foreign language (88%), followed by Russian (32%), German (24%), Turkish (13%), and Kazakh (11%). Russian language schools in Kazakhstan that teach Kazakh as a foreign language could be one reason why 11% of respondents reported learning Kazakh as a foreign language when only 5% of respondents are from outside Kazakhstan. RS1 said that they had Russian as a foreign language in school, but do not consider it a foreign language because it is almost as native to them as Kazakh. A much higher proportion of respondents most likely took Russian as a foreign language, but for the reason provided by RS1 did not list it as such.

Kazakh was listed most often as the language that respondents speak at home (76%), followed by Russian (64%), Tatar (3%), Turkish (1%), and other minority languages. Many of the respondents who wrote that Kazakh or Russian is spoken at home come from bilingual households, with 41% claiming that both are used. ES estimates that in their household they speak Kazakh 80% of the time and Russian 20% of the time. This demonstrates that even though someone might list their household as bilingual with Kazakh and Russian, usage of these may vary widely.

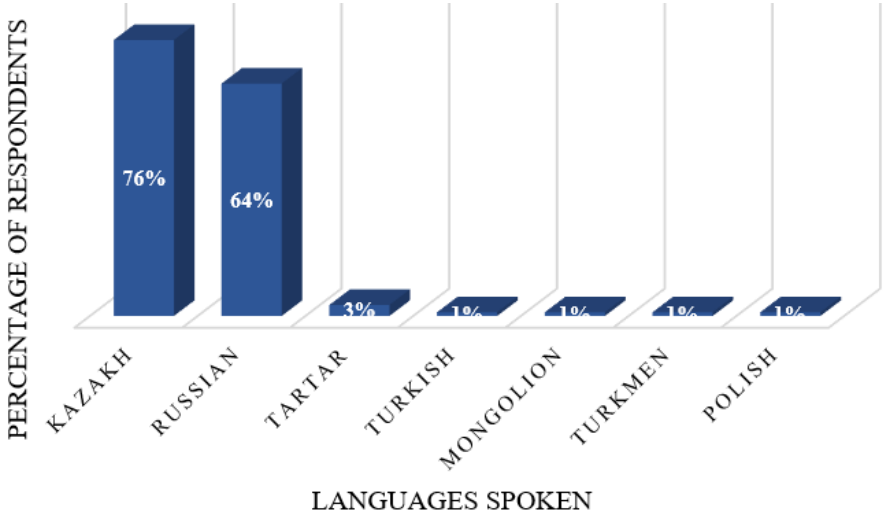


Fig. 9. Respondent Languages Spoken at Home.

While Kazakhstanis may be speaking Kazakh more at home, in public Russian is the more commonly used language. Russian was cited by the majority of respondents as the language that they use when speaking to their peers (85%), followed by Kazakh (62%), English (7%), Turkmen, Polish, and Turkish (1% respectively). A large number of respondents said that they communicate in both Russian and Kazakh (48%), or have a situation like AK1 where they mostly use Russian, but sometimes mix in Kazakh.

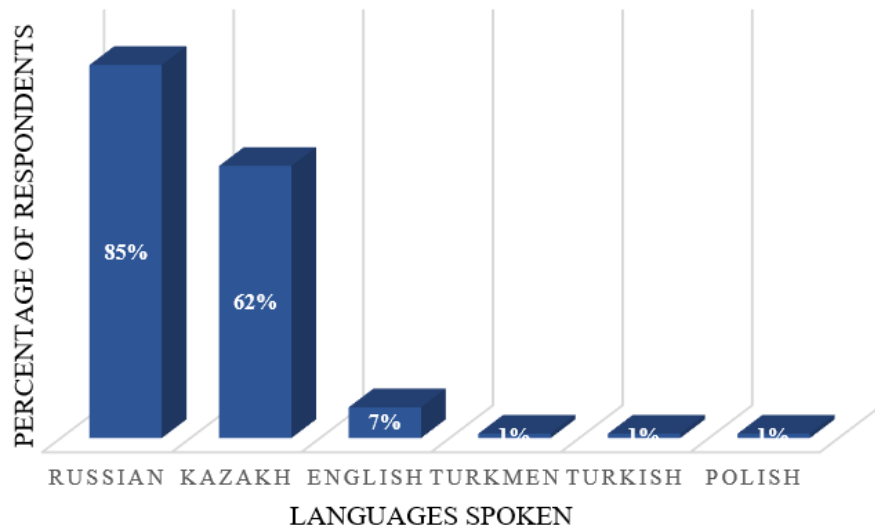


Fig. 10. Respondent Languages Spoken with Peers.

In this section the reader has been provided with an overview of several important factors relating to survey respondents. It has been determined that students make up the single largest occupation group (43%), the largest age demographic is represented by respondents under 25 years old (51%), and the majority of respondents are from Kazakhstan (97%). The majority of respondents speak Kazakh at home (76%), but Russian dominates the overall linguistic sphere with 99% claiming knowledge of the language and 85% saying they use it with their peers. Now that respondents' demographics have been established, their opinions and views on alphabet reform can be examined and evaluated.

III. PUBLIC OPINION AS A FACTOR AFFECTING REFORM SUCCESS

The following results section and subsequent discussion correspond to the public opinion section of the survey. This section establishes respondents' overall views towards Kazakhstan's alphabet reform, while also exploring several related factors including the impact of social media on the transition process and the ease with which the older generation will be able to transition to the Latin alphabet.

a. RESULTS

In general, respondents were more likely to support the alphabet reform. 47% said that they are for the reform, 33% said that they are against it, and 20% said that they are neutral towards it. Multiple respondents such as RS and AK believe that the reform is long overdue, and that it should have been completed immediately following the collapse of the USSR. Other respondents express their support more hesitatingly, with MA stating that they support the alphabet reform *if* it can be implemented correctly with the entire population receiving proper training. Those who are against the reform, like KA, believe that Kazakhstan does not have the proper resources to effectively transition. BB is in the neutral group, saying that they simply do not care.

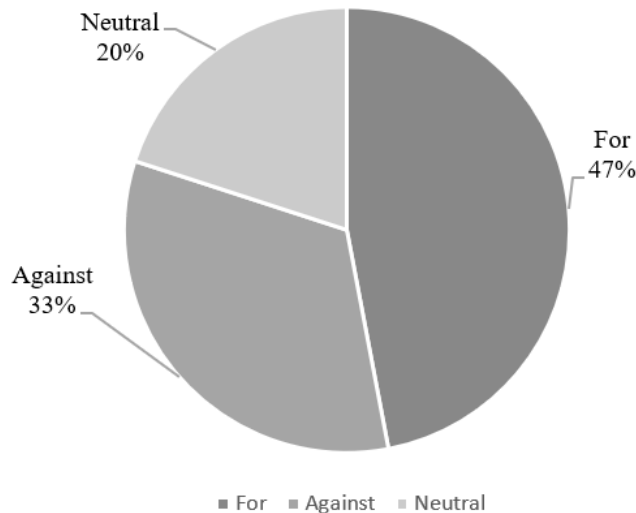


Fig. 11. Respondent's General Support of the Alphabet Reform.

Support for the reform is not equal across age groups. For each generation support increases by roughly 20 percentage points. Respondents under 25 years of age are largely against the reform (49% against, 31% for, 20% neutral), while those aged 26-50 are more positive (52% for, 30%

against, 18% neutral), and not a single respondent over the age of 51 said that they are against the reform (73% for, 27% neutral, 0% against). The reader is reminded that respondents over the age of 51 made up only 16% of surveys completed, however the high amount of support is still significant considering that the older generation is more likely to have difficulties learning and transitioning to the new alphabet.

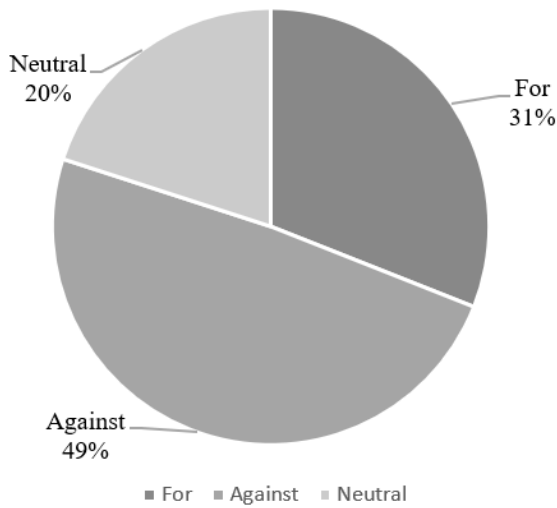


Fig. 12. Support with Ages Under 25.

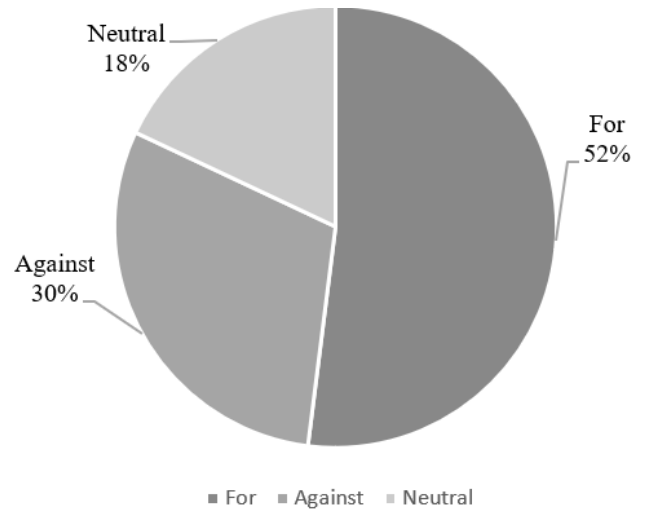


Fig. 13. Support with Ages 26-50.

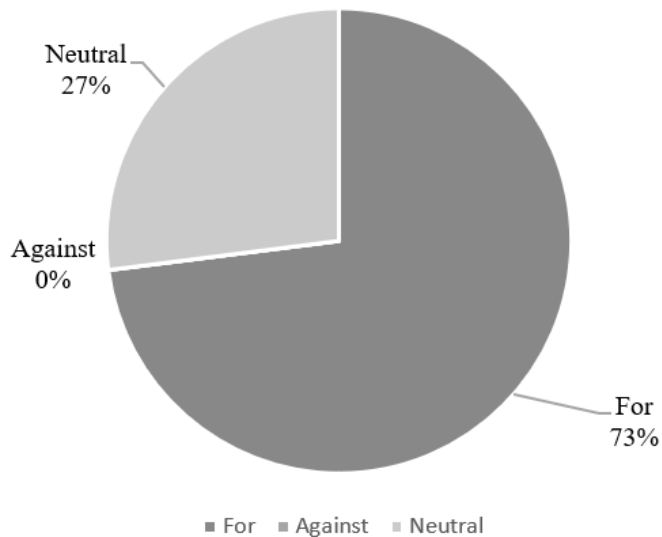


Fig. 14. Support with Ages 51+.

Many respondents, especially younger ones, wrote that they are concerned that the older generation will not be able to learn the new alphabet, implying that the older generation is against the reform. However, 58-year-old XX1 wrote that they believe the alphabet reform is the next step in entering the modern world, and that they expect it to be relatively painless for young people. 52-year-old DK also believes that it will give Kazakhstanis a chance to enter the modern world. It seems as though the younger generation is concerned about the older generation managing during the alphabet reform, while the older generation is thinking more about the younger generation and their future. If nothing else, from looking at the data it can be said that Kazakhstani society is a thoughtful one.

When asked what they believe the general public opinion of the alphabet switch is, the largest group of respondents said that they believe it's negative (40%), followed by those that believe the opinion is mixed (35%), those who believe it is positive (16%), and neutral (9%). It is interesting that such a small percentage believe that the general opinion of the alphabet reform is positive, when so many respondents said that they personally are for it (47%). One possible explanation comes from AK1, who says that they often see negative comments on the internet relating to the alphabet reform. Perhaps the minority that opposes the reform is simply so vocal in their displeasure that it seems like the majority are against it.

Looking at the benefits of alphabet reform listed by respondents, one will notice a general trend of becoming more integrated on the world stage. The most cited benefit of the alphabet reform is that it will be easier for people who use the Latin alphabet to learn or read Kazakh (34%), followed by becoming more globalized (30%), helping Kazakhstanis learn foreign languages written in the Latin alphabet such as English or Turkish (25%), moving away from Russian influence (13%), and moving closer to Turkic culture (9%). It becomes clear that the alphabet reform is viewed as most helpful in its ability to promote Kazakhstan's international ranking by moving closer to the Turkic and Western worlds, while simultaneously marginalizing Russian influence on Kazakhstani affairs and Kazakh culture.

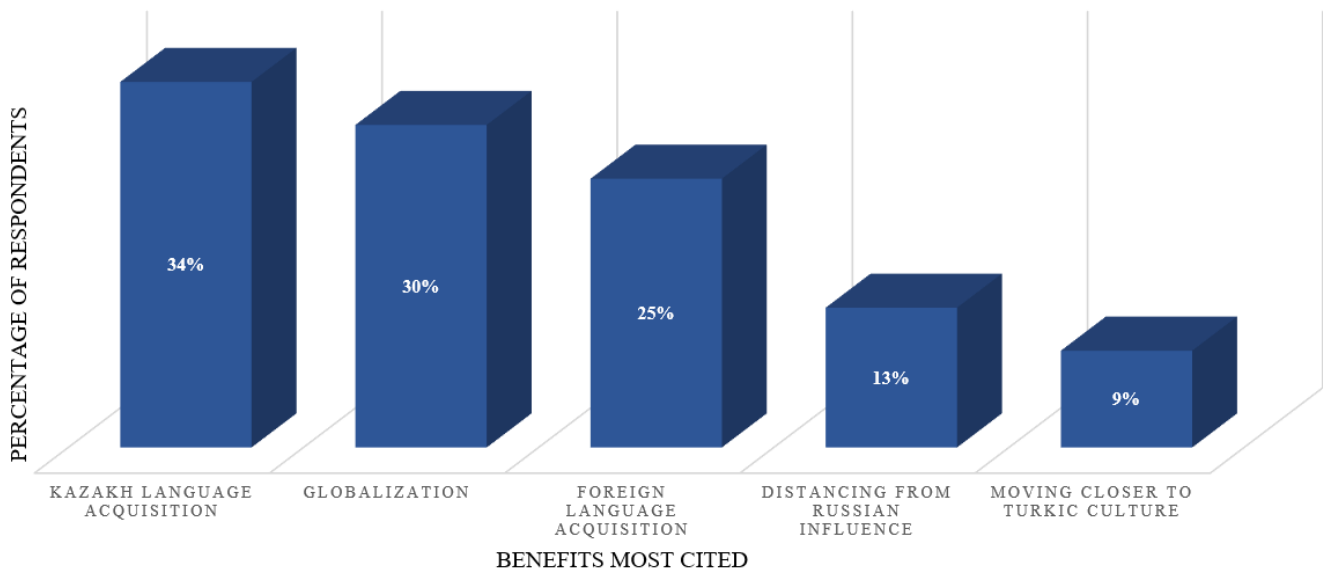


Fig. 15. Most Cited Benefits of the Alphabet Reform.

In terms of the downsides of transitioning to the Latin alphabet, respondents most commonly answered that the heavy financial burden is the largest drawback for them (37%), followed by difficulty for the older generation in mastering the alphabet (28%), that the transition requires too much time (21%), that too much information and data is already in Cyrillic (19%), and that people in general are too versed in Cyrillic already (18%). It is possible that there is some overlap with respondents who said that people are already too familiar with Cyrillic and those that cited difficulty for the older generation as the main downsides.

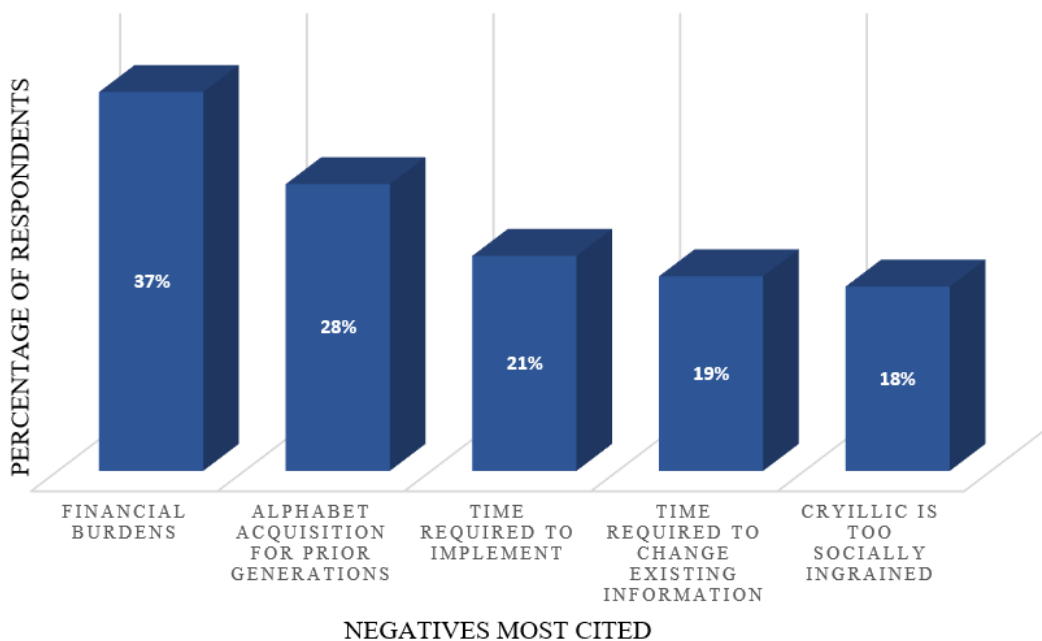


Fig. 16. Most Cited Negatives of the Alphabet Reform.

One question specifically asked respondents whether they think the older generation will be able to successfully learn and use the Latin alphabet. The largest group answered that they would not be able to successfully learn it (49%), followed by those who said possibly (36%), and the smallest group said that they would be successful (15%). HA pointed out that it might not be as difficult for the older generation as some respondents think, considering that many of them learned foreign languages with the Latin alphabet or used it in school subjects like chemistry and math. When the question was opened up to whether respondents believe that people of all ages will be able to successfully use the Latin alphabet considering its technological omnipresence (keyboards, web addresses, etc.), the responses became much more positive. Most respondents believe that the general population will be able to comfortably use the new alphabet (55%), followed by those who said they will not be able to use it successfully (31%), and those who said the general population will possibly be able to use the Latin alphabet (14%).

As the modern age is often characterized by the prevalence of the internet, respondents were asked what role they believe social media has played in selecting and adopting the new Latin alphabet. Many respondents believe that the internet has played some sort of role (38%), followed by those who believe it played a very large role (33%), those who think it played zero role (19%), and those who believe it played little to no role (10%). YT writes that social media was important for criticizing different versions of the alphabet and actively engaging in discussions. AE believes that the government listened to social media criticism, and that it did in fact affect their decision when considering which version of the Latin alphabet to use. This view was echoed by several other respondents.

As mentioned in the literature review of this thesis, one of the main arguments for switching to the Latin alphabet is that it will make the Kazakh language more technologically compatible with things like computer programs and keyboards. Respondents appeared to largely agree with this, with 67% expressing their support for this point, 27% did not agree, and 6% said they partially agree. Multiple respondents who did not agree with this such as PP and DX validly brought up the point that other countries such as Russia and China do not see the need to switch to the Latin alphabet to make their languages more technologically compatible.

The last question in this section of the survey asked respondents whether they consider Kazakhstan’s transition to the Latin alphabet to be a political statement against Russia. 81% of respondents do not consider it a political statement against Russia, followed by 8% that possibly do, 6% who say it is complicated, and only 5% say that it is. Many respondents noted that the alphabet reform is simply Kazakhstan following its own path of self-development, but that there is inevitably political subtext involved with the decision, whether intentional or not.

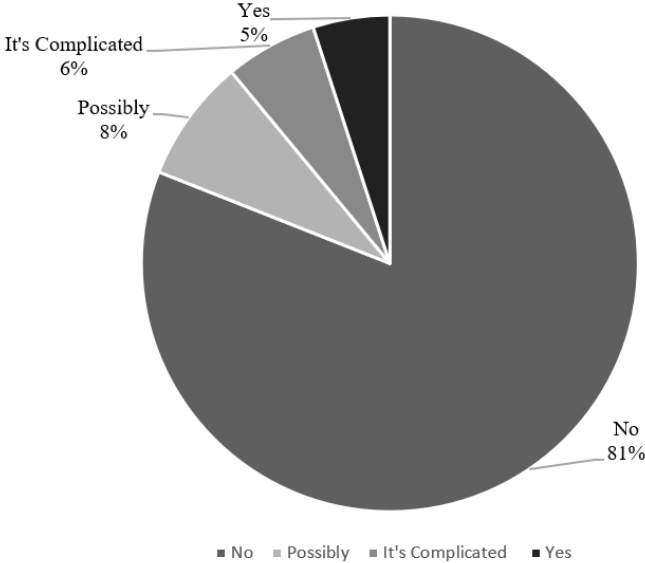


Fig. 17. Respondent’s Opinion on Whether Reform is a Political Statement Against Russia.

b. DISCUSSION

Public opinion is an important factor in implementing an alphabet reform. One of the reasons that Uzbekistan’s alphabet reform stalled was due to a public support problem brought on by financial issues. It is estimated that at the time of Uzbekistan’s independence from the USSR 80% of the population supported social reforms, including alphabet reform.¹⁰⁰ However, after a revision of the newly adopted alphabet in 1995, the Uzbekistani government realized that the alphabet reform was in dire financial straits and started forcing private companies to contribute to the reform’s budget. Subsequently, Uzbekistan experienced a sharp decline in public support for the alphabet reform, which Kenzhekhanuly argues is one of the reasons that the reform was already coming to a halt by

¹⁰⁰ Kenzhekhanuly, “Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms,” 140.

the mid-1990s.¹⁰¹ If Uzbekistan had been able to maintain a higher level of public support, then there would have been more initiative on the part of the citizens to implement the reform, rather than it solely being the government's responsibility.

Kazakhstan does not seem to be in such a dire position in terms of public opinion. With only 33% of survey respondents saying that they are against the alphabet reform, it is likely that there will be some degree of initiative on the part of most of the population to learn the alphabet themselves, thereby showing at least preliminary support for the reform. One area that can be improved however is not public opinion of the reform, but the public's perception of the reform's popularity.

That 40% of respondents said that they believe public opinion of the reform is negative (as opposed to 16% positive) shows that even though individual citizens might have enthusiasm for the reform, they believe that those around them do not. This is dangerous, because it may facilitate the creation of a complacent civic attitude. The government must attempt to highlight positive support for the reform in order to tap into the latent enthusiasm which a large portion of respondents do possess.

Social media is a modern tool which can be very effective in raising both public support for the alphabet reform and public perception of the reform's popularity. It seems that Kazakhstan's government realizes this though, since as early as 2017 they were actively listening to critique on social media regarding the then-version of the Kazakh alphabet.¹⁰² Kazakhstan's use of social media in terms of garnering support can be improved though. KD wrote on their survey that social networks have not only been an active discussion platform, but have also been used by the authorities to influence users in favor of the adoption of the Latin alphabet. As social media is widely used by the younger population, it is interesting then to remember that respondents under the age of 25 were the most negative towards the reform, with 49% saying that they are against it. As the younger generation is the future of the country (and the alphabet reform), then Kazakhstan would do well to change its social media propaganda strategy in order to generate positivity about the reform more effectively. Perhaps this could be done by addressing the downsides of the reform

¹⁰¹ Kenzhekhanuly, "Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms," 141.

¹⁰² Рустем К. Кадыржанов, "Модернизация общественного сознания в условиях четвертой промышленной революции в Казахстане," *Вестник Казахского университета международных отношений и мировых языков имени Абылай хана* 1 (2018): 34-35.

most often cited by younger respondents, namely showing that there is a plan to help the older generation learn the new alphabet and a strategy for minimizing financial loss due to reform.

Public opinion is important not only in the sense of approval for the reform, but also how the underlying reason for the reform is perceived, particularly in relation to Russia. Chsherbakov argues that the Kazakhstani government is failing to accrue more public support for the reform, because they are concealing the real, ideological reasons for the reform which is de-Russification.¹⁰³ This implies that it would be possible for the Kazakhstani government to greatly increase reform support if they were more forward with their (alleged) desire to de-Russify. This, however, cannot reasonably be expected to happen.

Kazakhstan shares an almost 7000 km (4350 mi) border with Russia, with much of Kazakhstan's sizable Russian minority (roughly one-fifth of their population) concentrated in border regions. Having observed Russia's actions to protect "ethnic Russian interests" in Ukraine, Kazakhstan is wary either of Russian intervention in its border regions, or the Russian population in these regions attempting to break away if they feel too threatened by the alphabet reform.¹⁰⁴ This dynamic has already forced Kazakhstan to re-evaluate its attempt at Latinization several times. In the mid-2000s, former President Nursultan Nazarbayev's comments about renewed interest in alphabet reform were instantly considered by Russian media as pointedly distancing the country from Moscow.¹⁰⁵ The subsequent 2007 plan for alphabet reform released by the Ministry of Education was scrapped after only a few months. It is suspected that the plan was stopped due to the sensitivity of the issue among the Russian-speaking population of Kazakhstan.¹⁰⁶

Russia's political predilections continue to complicate this, with the Russian Foundation for Strategic Culture stating that the Latin alphabet is simply a tool used by the United States to expand its influence and interests.¹⁰⁷ This puts Kazakhstan in an awkward position where they must strike a careful balance between being authentic enough with their reasons for alphabet reform, so as to

¹⁰³ Chsherbakov, "An Exercise in Argumentative Writing," 32.

¹⁰⁴ Dietrich, "Language Policy and Hegemony," 153-156.

¹⁰⁵ Кадыржанов, "Выбор алфавита," 105.

¹⁰⁶ Dietrich, "Language Policy and Hegemony," 155.

¹⁰⁷ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 4.

have sufficient public support, but also formulate their reasoning in way that is not perceived as any sort of threat to ethnic Russian interests, either by ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan or Russia itself.

To summarize, public opinion is one of the key factors in successfully completing an alphabet reform. An absence of public support was undoubtedly one of the reasons that Uzbekistan's alphabet reform stalled. Kazakhstan seems to be faring a little better in terms of public support, seeing as how 47% of survey respondents support the reform and only 33% are against it. The situation can be improved though by using social media to more effectively communicate positive messages about Latinization to the younger population, along with changing how the public believes those around them perceive the alphabet reform. These tasks must, however, be completed without stepping too much on the toes of Kazakhstan's ethnic Russian minority, thereby inviting intervention from Russia or inciting social unrest in the Russian-heavy northern border regions.

IV. EDUCATION AS A FACTOR AFFECTING REFORM SUCCESS

The following results section and subsequent discussion correspond to the education section of the survey. Multiple aspects of Kazakhstani education and how they relate to the alphabet reform are examined including the ease of transitioning all levels of education to the Latin alphabet, the influence of the Latin alphabet on learning Kazakh, and the government's plan to teach residents of Kazakhstan to use the new alphabet.

a. RESULTS

The first question in this section asked respondents which levels of Kazakhstani education are either using or are trying to introduce the Latin alphabet. No quantitative data is provided for this question as respondents either had rather varied responses or simply did not know. At first glance it appears that no levels of Kazakhstani education are using the new alphabet, as Kadyrzhanov wrote that approval of the new version of the alphabet is still under consideration, and therefore not being used in the Kazakhstani education system. However, the previously approved version does seem to have been in the process of being introduced when it was believed to be the final version of the alphabet, most likely in an experimental capacity. AX3, who works at a linguistics institute in Kazakhstan, wrote that training was conducted among philologists in 2019 for learning to use the new alphabet, but this work was interrupted when current President Tokayev called for adjustments to the alphabet. KE wrote that when visiting secondary schools, all visual information (signs, directories, etc.) is in the Latin alphabet, further indicating that the alphabet was being introduced to some degree when it was halted. Re-introduction of the alphabet is expected after approval of a new final version.

The response was positive when respondents were asked whether the transition to the new alphabet will go smoothly for university students. 60% believe it will go smoothly, 23% do not, and 17% said possibly. BB responded that current university students were born roughly 1996-2002, after the fall of the Soviet Union, and therefore should already know Latin letters (as they are frequently used with technology). This was echoed by AN, who said that the generation that currently attends university is familiar with the Latin alphabet, and must only learn several new Kazakh-specific letters. MA2 answered more cautiously, saying that it will depend on the individual student. Respondents were even more optimistic when asked whether the transition would go smoothly for grade-schoolers (students aged roughly 5-17). 66% of respondents believe the transition will go

smoothly for grade-schoolers, 22% do not, and 12% believe it will possibly go smoothly. Multiple respondents such as ZA and AN indicated that the younger the student, the more quickly and effectively they will learn the new alphabet. AX3 highlighted that the burden of learning the new alphabet only partially falls on the students themselves, pointing out that grade-schoolers will only be able to successfully learn the new alphabet if the standard curriculum and textbooks are correctly and competently compiled. This is supported by ZA1, who mentioned that teachers must be the first ones to master the new alphabet before one becomes worried about students mastering it.

Without textbooks and workbooks, it would be quite difficult for teachers to teach and implement the new alphabet, as students would still have to read Kazakh in Cyrillic to complete their standard curriculum classes. One question, therefore, inquired as to the availability of learning materials in the new Kazakh Latin alphabet. Once more, the issue arises that in 2019 it was decided to make adjustments to the alphabet roughly a year and a half after the approval of the previous version in early 2018.¹⁰⁸ AX3 wrote that textbooks had been developed both for philologists and mass learning, but that with changes to the alphabet there might be corrections made to them. It appears that there will indeed be changes made to them, as Kadyrzhanov writes that until the new alphabet is approved, it is impossible to talk about textbooks or manuals.

Should comprehensive and effective learning materials be made available, it remains to be seen whether this would cause more people in Kazakhstan to learn Kazakh. As 85% of survey respondents said that they use Russian with their peers (as opposed to 62% who use Kazakh), Russian still dominates in public communication. When respondents were asked whether they believe more Kazakhstanis will learn Kazakh after it has transitioned to the Latin alphabet, their responses were largely negative. 45% do not believe it will inspire more people to learn Kazakh, 35% believe it will, and 20% believe that it possibly will. Many respondents believe that people will simply be satisfied to continue using Russian. SN stated that ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan have had the chance for years to learn Kazakh in the Cyrillic alphabet and have not done it, so it

¹⁰⁸ Aidana Yergaliyeva, “Fourth Version of Kazakh Latin Script Will Preserve Language Purity, Linguists Say,” *The Astana Times*, November 18, 2019, <https://astanatimes.com/2019/11/fourth-version-of-kazakh-latin-script-will-preserve-language-purity-linguists-say/>.

is unlikely that a transition to Latin will motivate them to do so now. Kadyrzhanov asserted that the development and prestige of the Kazakh language itself is more important for creating interest in learning it, rather than just changing the alphabet. BB echoes this, pointing out that if a language does not bring any benefits to its speaker, then there is little motivation to learn it.

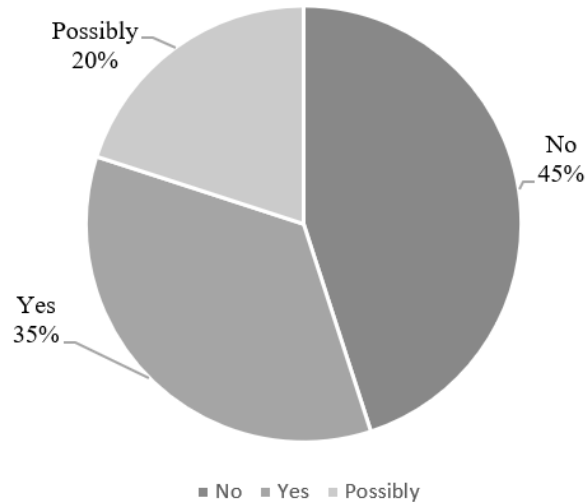


Fig. 18. Respondent's Opinion on Whether Kazakhstanis are More Likely to Learn Kazakh Post-Reform.

As a large portion of Kazakhstan's population is not in school, the last question in this section asked respondents how they believe the government will train working adults to use the new Latin alphabet. Some sort of plan does exist, as Kadyrzhanov responded that it is presumed that the government will create free courses to instruct citizens on properly using the new alphabet, but how effective these courses will be is disputed. KA1 worries that many adults will simply not attend classes, as they have other obligations such as work and family and cannot afford to take the time out of their routine to attend an alphabet workshop. KD believes that this can be partially solved by utilizing internet resources. If Kazakhstan can invest in creating quality internet programs to teach the new alphabet and make its citizens aware of these programs, then this could greatly help a large portion of the adult population that will not be able to attend in-person classes.

b. DISCUSSION

To appreciate just how essential an effective plan is for introducing a new alphabet into a country's education system, one has only to compare the experience of Uzbekistan's first Latinization with

the current reform. In January 1928 the UzCEC commenced introducing the newly chosen Uzbek Latin alphabet in educational institutions around the country, starting from the third grade of primary school onwards. From January 31 of the same year all new textbooks were to be printed in the Latin alphabet. However, there would be a period of time when the old Arabic alphabet textbooks were still used while the new ones were being introduced. After 1930 it was prohibited to print Uzbek language materials in the Arabic alphabet, and by July 1931 Uzbekistan's transition to the Latin alphabet was declared completed.¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that the low literacy rate of Uzbekistan's citizens also contributed to the success of their first Latinization, as mentioned in the literature review. Uzbekistan's current alphabet reform has been distinctly less successful in the sphere of education. Currently any instruction in the Uzbek language at schools or universities is conducted in the Uzbek Latin alphabet,¹¹⁰ which is indeed a positive step in the right direction. Not all institutions that teach in Uzbek have access to materials in the Latin alphabet though, and in particular many textbooks in remote regions of the country are still in Cyrillic.¹¹¹ This lack of textbooks has caused a decrease in the education levels of both schools and institutions of higher education in Uzbekistan,¹¹² proving that one of the critical steps to reforming a country's alphabet is ensuring that all aspects of education be carefully addressed in order to facilitate a smooth transition for students. Uzbekistan was careful to decisively enact proper measures relating to education during its first Latinization, but a failure to do so during its modern alphabet reform has had negative consequences.

It is unclear whether Kazakhstan will be able to avoid Uzbekistan's education mistakes during the transition to the Latin alphabet. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, 2020 is planned as the first year that kindergarten and first grade students nationwide will officially begin using the Latin alphabet. This deadline is rapidly approaching and there has been limited communication about the preparation status of learning materials, as well as the preparedness level of teachers to teach the new alphabet.¹¹³ The likelihood of such education programs commencing by the end of 2020 was already under question. Considering recent events related to COVID-19, it

¹⁰⁹ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 54.

¹¹⁰ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 5.

¹¹¹ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 5.

¹¹² Kenzhekhanuly, "Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms," 141.

¹¹³ Татия, и Кадыржанов "Казахская латиница."

seems especially unlikely that Kazakhstan will be able to fulfill its education goals prior to the deadline. This does not necessarily mean that Kazakhstan's education system will follow the same fate as Uzbekistan's, but it should spur officials to develop a plan that will mitigate the damage done, and better address the issue of introducing the new alphabet in schools.

A reluctance by residents of Kazakhstan to learn the Kazakh language will also hinder the alphabet reform. Chsherbakov states that there is the enormous risk that Russophone motivation to learn Kazakh will decrease immediately after the transition to an unfamiliar alphabet.¹¹⁴ Indeed, 45% of respondents agree that the Latin alphabet will not inspire more people to learn Kazakh, and this poses a threat to the reform's success. Substantial portions of the population resolving not to learn Kazakh *as a result of* its adoption of the Latin alphabet gives current Kazakh-speakers little reason to support the reform, and in fact it might do the opposite. If a person speaks Kazakh and their goal is the promotion of the language by creating new speakers, then they will be less likely to support the reform if it causes Kazakhstanis to lose interest in learning the language.

Those that do want to learn the new Kazakh Latin alphabet should be able to attend classes that the government provides, as not having that opportunity could create future problems for completing the transition. Uzbekistan's 1993 law which initiated its alphabet transition received an appended decree which called for intensive adult courses to be provided for the purpose of training residents to use the new version of the Uzbek alphabet.¹¹⁵ These classes received little attention though, the negative effects of which can be seen when examining Uzbekistani adults' competency in the Latin alphabet today. During Uzbekistan's recent parliamentary elections in 2019, only one candidate in Tashkent had her political posters in the Latin alphabet. Her reasoning was that she was trying to appeal to younger Uzbekistanis,¹¹⁶ indicating that older Uzbekistanis remain unskilled in the Latin alphabet, due partially to the government not providing proper training.

¹¹⁴ Chsherbakov, "An Exercise in Argumentative Writing," 34.

¹¹⁵ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 29.

¹¹⁶ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 5.



Fig. 19. Poster from Uzbekistan’s 2019 parliamentary election in Uzbek Cyrillic. Courtesy of Schweizer, 2020.



Fig. 20. Poster from Uzbekistan’s 2019 parliamentary election in the Uzbek Latin alphabet. Courtesy of Schweizer, 2020.

Kazakhstan has an opportunity to learn from the mistakes that Uzbekistan made when implementing the new alphabet throughout their education system. In particular it is important to possess well-developed education materials, which can be made available to all students who will be studying using the Kazakh Latin alphabet. The majority of respondents believe that it will be easy for both university students and grade-schoolers to learn the new alphabet, but providing effective textbooks in the new alphabet is key to unlocking this potential. For university students and older grade-schoolers, the transition in the classroom will be relatively easy, as many young people already send messages in Kazakh using the Latin alphabet,¹¹⁷ albeit a non-official form of it.

If Kazakhstan wants to increase its chances of successfully implementing a new alphabet, the government needs to work on improving the prestige of the Kazakh language in order to inspire more people to learn it. This would give current Kazakh-speakers incentive to invest in the development of the Kazakh language through their support for alphabet reform. Finally, Kazakhstan must provide Latin alphabet workshops for adults in the interest of avoiding a situation where 30 years from now the majority of their written election material is in the ‘old’ alphabet.

¹¹⁷ Нурлигенова, и Лим, “Переход на латиницу,” 59.

V. POLITICS AS A FACTOR AFFECTING REFORM SUCCESS

The following results sections and subsequent discussion correspond to the politics section of the survey. Examined here are respondents' views on how democratic Kazakhstan's alphabet reform is, the amount of information that residents have received during the transition, and the government's ability to effectively complete the transition. Respondents' opinions on the Kazakhstani government's handling of the reform are largely negative.

a. RESULTS

62% of respondents do not consider Kazakhstan's transition to the Latin alphabet a democratic decision. 38% do.

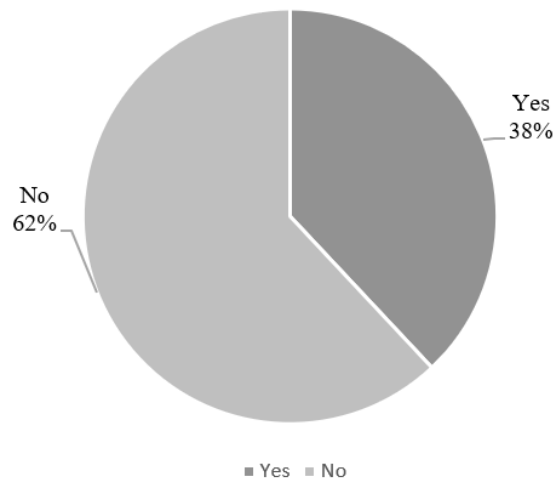


Fig. 21. Respondent's Opinion on Whether the Reform was a Democratic Decision.

It should be noted that there is a margin of error here, as the second part of the question asked respondents whether the government consulted the public about transitioning, therefore some respondents might have responded "yes", meaning that the government consulted the public, but that they do not consider the transition democratic. Likewise, it is also possible that a respondent answered "no" meaning that the government did not consult the public, but that they consider it a democratic decision, though this is unlikely. Those that responded that they do consider it a democratic decision seem to believe that discussion in any capacity is equated with democracy. KD, AX3, ES, and HA all responded that they believe the decision is democratic because there is a large amount of public discussion regarding the decision, some of them pointing to the length of time that the reform has been discussed as an indicator of its democratic nature. Kadyrzhanov stops

short of saying that the reform was democratic, writing that there was a lot of openness and communication before the 2017 decree on transitioning the alphabet, but that the affair became more closed off afterwards. AE does not consider the reform democratic as there was no popular vote, but admits that the government has been making changes to the alphabet based on public criticism of various versions of the alphabet. BB believes that the decision is democratic on the part of current President Tokayev, who has decreed that the 2018 version of the alphabet be changed, but not on the part of former President N. Nazarbayev.

50% of respondents do not believe that the switch to the Latin alphabet will be completed in a timely manner, while 25% believe it will, and 25% believe that it is possible to do so. Several respondents indicated that it is more a question of quality rather than time. AE responded that the reform might be completed on time, but that its quality could be lacking. Similarly, ES wrote that it is critical to comprehensively prepare the transition, taking into account administrative and financial resources rather than meeting a time frame. Therefore, it may not necessarily be a bad thing that 49% of respondents said that it is possible that the government will continue to delay the complete alphabet switch past its current deadline of 2025 (vs. 40% who said it will definitely be delayed and only 11% who said it will not). If people realize that the important thing is the quality of the switch and not how quickly it can be done, then respondents who asserted that the switch will be delayed past 2025 might be okay with that, as it will allow the government more time to comprehensively transition. AK1 pointed out that the COVID-19 crisis has possibly already made this time frame unrealistic. Even without considering the damage done to the transition time frame by COVID-19, the majority of respondents do not have faith in the government's ability to competently handle the transition. 52% of respondents do not believe that the government is truly determined to transition to the new alphabet in a quick and effective manner, while 25% possibly do, and only 23% do. AX1 responded that the government is determined to transition quickly, but not effectively.

Interestingly enough, respondents were slightly more positive when talking about a specific portion of the plan rather than the entire timeline. When asked how likely it is that the transition of official records (passports, IDs, etc.) will be completed within the government-set time frame of 2021-2023, 38% of respondents said that it is likely that this will be completed on time, 36%

believe it is unlikely to happen, and 26% believe it will possibly (or partially) happen. As with the overall time frame, DS noted that COVID-19 has most likely caused this phase of the transition to be postponed. Kadyrzhanov echoes this, saying that it is unlikely that the issuance of documents will begin in 2021. Financial difficulties are largely expected at some point during the transition process. 59% of respondents anticipate financial problems during the alphabet reform, 26% do not, and 15% possibly do. DV, SA, and AX1 all commented that the quarantine caused by COVID-19 all but ensure financial hardships going forward. Kadyrzhanov believes that both COVID-19 and falling oil prices will negatively impact Kazakhstan’s finances during the reform.

One area where respondents overwhelmingly agree that the government is failing is communication with the public about the progress of the alphabet reform. 73% of respondents believe that the government is either not communicating with the public about the alphabet reform or is not doing enough to keep people updated on its progress, while 20% believe it is doing enough, and 7% believe it possibly is. Some answers are quite conflicting. Kadyrzhanov reported that the government is doing a poor job of providing the public with information, while linguist AX3 wrote that informational strategies for updating the population on the reform have been very well implemented. BB argued that the question is more complicated than it first appears, stating that there are too many independent news sources which modify government information and produce conflicting reports, thereby creating problems adequately disseminating information to the public.

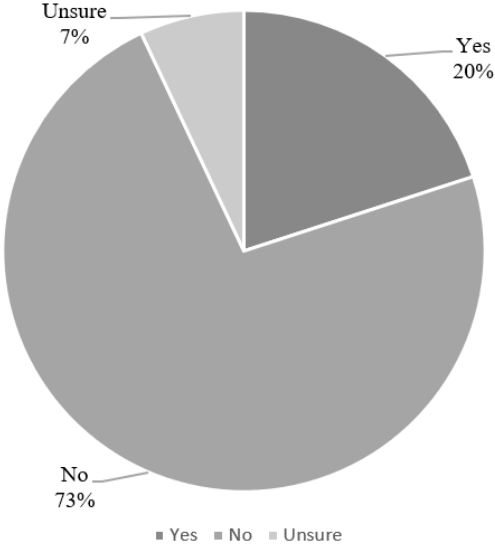


Fig. 22. Respondent’s Opinion on Whether the Kazakhstani Government is Adequately Communicating Reform Progress to the Public.

b. DISCUSSION

Former President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the transition to the Latin alphabet and it subsequently began being implemented in a top-down manner without any sort of national referendum.¹¹⁸ Kosmarskij describes a similar situation at the time that Uzbekistan decided to switch to the Latin alphabet, saying that the move to transition strongly resembled Soviet-era decision making. In other words, the decision was made behind closed doors and announced as the “wishes of the general public”.¹¹⁹ From this information the conclusion can be drawn that neither Uzbekistan’s nor Kazakhstan’s decision to transition to the Latin alphabet was a democratic one.

No survey respondents who said that the decision was democratic offered evidence of a referendum, which they would have done had they truly wanted to show that Kazakhstan’s transition is a democratic one, further affirming that it is not. As was mentioned earlier, an estimated 80% of Uzbekistan’s population supported reform at the time of independence,¹²⁰ hinting that if Uzbekistan had held an alphabet referendum, there is a good chance that it would have been approved by popular vote. Therefore, it is possible that whether the decision is democratic actually has little effect on the end result, seeing as how Uzbekistan’s alphabet reform still failed, even with initial support. Kazakhstan’s reform success may then be possible despite not being initiated democratically, although this means that a high degree of public initiative to learn the new alphabet should not be expected.

As previously stated in the literature review, one of the measures of an alphabet reform’s success is the amount of time that a country experiences diachronic digraphia, the period when two alphabets are used simultaneously.¹²¹ Uzbekistan has extended its deadline for a completed transition multiple times,¹²² leading some to claim that the transitional period has damaged Uzbekistan’s societal education level.¹²³ It therefore stands to reason that a relatively quick but effectively done transition is the most promising way to reform a country’s alphabet without

¹¹⁸ Chsherbakov, “An Exercise in Argumentative Writing,” 33.

¹¹⁹ Космарский, “Смыслы латинизации,” 66.

¹²⁰ Kenzhekhanuly, “Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms,” 140.

¹²¹ Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 199.

¹²² Uzman, “Romanisation in Uzbekistan,” 59.

¹²³ Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 101.

causing a significant amount of lasting social damage. There were already unsubstantiated rumors in July, 2019 by Russian daily newspaper Izvestiya that Kazakhstan's alphabet reform would be delayed until 2035,¹²⁴ but this may soon not be out of the question. With a large number of survey respondents already doubting the viability of the government's transition timeline, plus COVID-19, it is indeed unlikely that the 2025 deadline will be met. However, in this instance Kazakhstan does have an advantage that Uzbekistan did not. Uzbekistan's government repeatedly insisted that they would meet their deadlines, but took little action to actually do so, possibly because they did not foresee the need for a definitive deadline extension. But Kazakhstan's officials are already aware of impending obstacles caused by COVID-19, and therefore should be able to make a plan that will work on minimizing damage that a delay could cause. Two factors that are important to the success of an alphabet reform are a dedicated national leader with stable authority and strong motivation of the country's leading elites.¹²⁵

The leaders of a country ought to be an example to citizens by receiving training in the new alphabet and utilizing it in their daily lives, thereby encouraging the country's general population to do the same. Uzbekistan failed to do this as today Cyrillic is still widely used by the government for paperwork, decrees, laws, and internal memos.¹²⁶ If the very people who trumpeted and initiated the reform do not use the new alphabet themselves, then other residents of the country will likely not do so either, showing that initiative by national leaders is indeed an important factor in the success of an alphabet reform. Kazakhstan can easily avoid this specific problem by providing extensive training in the new Kazakh Latin alphabet to state workers and strongly encouraging that the alphabet be used in official documents and communication going forward.

Landau has recognized that arguments for alphabet reform are usually of a more cultural nature, rather than a financial one.¹²⁷ This certainly seems to hold true for Uzbekistan, as the Uzbekistani Finance Ministry has said that there has never been a real calculation of the financial resources needed to transition to the Latin alphabet.¹²⁸ This has contributed to the multiple delays that have

¹²⁴ Almaz Kumenov, "Kazakhstan: Latin Switchover to Be Delayed?" Eurasianet, 2019, <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-latin-switchover-to-be-delayed>.

¹²⁵ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 32.

¹²⁶ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 5.

¹²⁷ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 26.

¹²⁸ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 6.

plagued Uzbekistan's alphabet reform in the past, and it continues to be detrimental to their reform today, as prohibitive costs make it unlikely that Uzbekistan's reform will be completed in the near future.¹²⁹

Finances are on the minds of Kazakhstanis as well, as cost and budget were the most cited downsides of the reform by survey respondents, along with 59% of respondents in this section stating that they anticipate financial hurdles. The Kazakhstani government appears to at least be partly on the same page as its citizens, as it has predicted that the alphabet reform will cost somewhere between US \$664 million and \$1 billion.¹³⁰ It is likely that COVID-19 related complications will damage the financial strategies thus far deployed by the Kazakhstani government, as well as future policies. The government is aware of this however, and unlike Uzbekistan they are capable of creating an approximate budget, plan, and roadmap, thereby lowering the likelihood that Kazakhstan's alphabet reform will be hindered by finances to the same degree that Uzbekistan's was.

With 73% of respondents expressing their belief that the Kazakhstani government has not done enough to keep the general population updated on the reform, this is an area that requires improvement. Not keeping the public sufficiently informed serves to alienate them from the reform, as it begins to seem less like something one is personally involved in, and more like something that is being enforced. In order to plan out and execute the alphabet reform, the reform's first stage (2018-2020) called for the creation of several committees dealing with various aspects of the transition such as methodological, terminological, and a working group for technical and information support. But despite the enormous amount of work that had to be done to build up the reform infrastructure, the public was told that there were issues creating a new keyboard and little information beyond this was provided.¹³¹

This occurred even after the government had planned a massive informational campaign to garner reform support by employing journalists and bloggers to keep up the constant presence of the

¹²⁹ Uzbekistan Unveils Its Latest Bash at Latin Alphabet," Eurasianet, May 22, 2019, <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-unveils-its-latest-bash-at-latin-alphabet>.

¹³⁰ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 7.

¹³¹ Татия, и Кадыржанов "Казахская латиница."

theme of reform in society. After 2017 this plan received little attention and interest in the reform decreased.¹³² Having decreased reform interest as a result of poor communication on the part of the government will do nothing except lead to a decrease in support for the transition to the Latin alphabet, endangering its success. The government should consider information dissemination an important factor in Kazakhstan's alphabet reform and use it as a tool to accrue public support.

That an alphabet reform be democratic is not a requirement for success, as seen by Uzbekistan's failure to carry out their alphabet reform with public support, but several other factors are key. A country must reduce its period of diachronic digraphia to mitigate societal damage as much as possible while also still carrying out the reform effectively and with a well-developed plan. The leaders of a country who develop this plan must be determined to implement it, and should lead by example by using the Latin alphabet in their own daily lives. Additionally, finances must be carefully monitored to ensure that funds endure until the reform is completed. In addition, all of this should be communicated to the general population in order to maintain a consistent and relatively high level of interest in the reform. COVID-19 has created obstacles with several of these factors, especially those involving finances and the anticipated duration of the reform. It is up to the ministers and policy makers in Kazakhstan's government to anticipate these difficulties and plan accordingly. It is only in this way that the prospects for a successful transition can be maximized.

¹³² Татия, и Кадыржанов “Казахская латиница.”

VI. LINGUISTICS AS A FACTOR AFFECTING REFORM SUCCESS

The following results section and subsequent discussion correspond to the linguistics section of the survey. Topics that will be examined include the continued use of Cyrillic by local and ethnic languages within Kazakhstan, the possibility of the Kazakhstani government forbidding the use of Cyrillic in the future, and the influence of the Russian language on transitioning to the Latin alphabet. The various versions of the Kazakh and Uzbek alphabets will also be explored in order to understand how their formulation and composition affect the chances of a successful alphabet reform. As results for this section were largely qualitative and a decent amount of background information is necessary to explain them, the statistical results will be briefly given followed by an extended discussion which will incorporate respondents' answers to other questions in the linguistics section.

a. RESULTS

Russian and Kazakh are not the only languages spoken in Kazakhstan that use the Cyrillic alphabet. There are several minority languages, such as Dungan and Uighur, which also use Cyrillic. Dungan, spoken in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, is very similar to Mandarin Chinese but with heavy influence from Farsi, Arabic, and Turkish, and is spoken in Kazakhstan by roughly 37,000 people.¹³³ Uighur is a Turkic language spoken roughly by ten million people throughout northwestern China and Central Asia.¹³⁴ When asked whether they thought these local languages will continue to use the Cyrillic alphabet, 83% of respondents said that they will, 12% said they possibly will, and 5% said they will not. GM1 pointed out that the government stated that the transition only concerns the state language (Kazakh), while HA, who works as a linguist, believes it is only a matter of time before local languages also begin using the Latin alphabet.

One of the more extreme ways to ensure a successful alphabet reform is to prohibit utilization of the previous alphabet. In this case, 54% of respondents do not believe that the Kazakhstani government will ever forbid the use of Cyrillic, while 23% believe that they will, and the other 23% believe it is possible. DV argues that, given Kazakhstan's low democracy index rating, a ban on Cyrillic is to be expected. A low rating does not necessitate that, however, and YT and

¹³³ Johanna Granville, "Dungan," Encyclopedia.com, Encyclopedia of Russian History, 2020, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/dungan>.

¹³⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Uighur," Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., February 5, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Uighur>.

Kadyrzhanov both indicated that, like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan will most likely not ban the Cyrillic alphabet.

The Kazakh language transitioning to the Latin alphabet will of course not affect the Russian language's use of Cyrillic, but according to respondents the widespread use of Russian in Kazakhstan may affect Kazakhstan's use of the Latin alphabet. 54% of respondents said that the pervasiveness of the Russian language in Kazakhstan will make it more difficult to use a Latin-based alphabet, 40% said it will not, and 6% said it possibly will. DK noted that the issue is complicated by the fact that some ethnic Kazakhs do not know their own "native" language. GM1 does not consider this a significant issue, saying that the Russian language was already losing ground in Kazakhstan before the announcement of switching to the Latin alphabet.

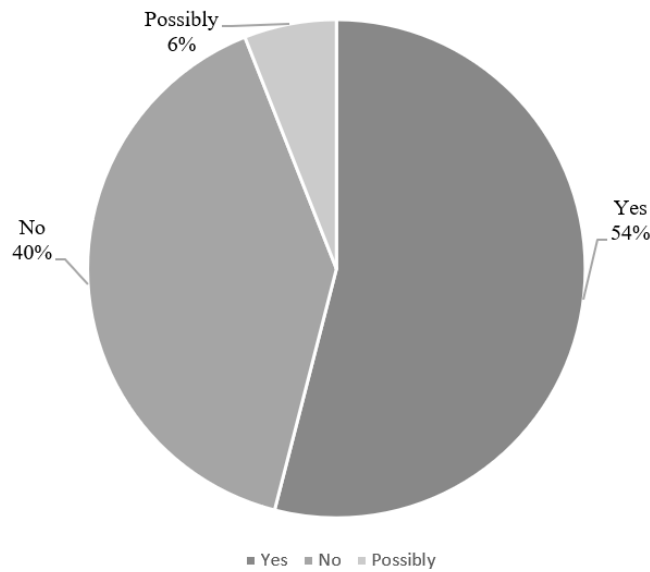


Fig. 23. Respondent's Opinion on Whether Russian Usage will Cause Difficulties with Learning the New Alphabet.

b. DISCUSSION

Until now this thesis has addressed various aspects of a country's alphabet reform except possibly the most important aspect: the alphabet itself. Unfortunately, transitioning from one alphabet to another is not as simple as using the letters from a language that uses the alphabet you are transitioning into. For example, even though Spanish uses the Latin alphabet, Kazakhstan could not simply copy its version of the Latin alphabet and declare a successful transition. This is because each language has phonetic characteristics unique to that language which must be taken into account when designing an alphabet. The reader will now be presented with background information on linguistically analyzing alphabet reform and a history of the specific versions of the Latin alphabet used by Uzbekistan since 1993. This provides a point of comparison for the subsequent analysis of Kazakhstan's reform.

i. Background Information: Uzbekistan's Latin Alphabets

It is important to try to create a language's alphabet as accurately as possible on the first attempt, as early mistakes can be highly detrimental to the eventual success of an alphabet reform. Uzbekistan's alphabet reform began experiencing delays when adjustments were made to the 1993 version of their alphabet just two years later in 1995.¹³⁵

The 1995 version of the Uzbek alphabet is the one currently in use. Several problems were caused by the 1995 alphabet adjustment. The first is that any progress which was made in designing all written materials for the 1993 version of the alphabet was effectively squandered. Secondly, this reform put additional strain on finances which reverberated throughout Uzbekistani society and caused reform support to rapidly decline amongst the population.¹³⁶ Therefore, in order to avoid delays and financial issues, it is best to create a well-developed version of the new alphabet as soon as possible, rather than deploy a prototype too earnestly.

Two linguistic terms often arise when discussing the specifics of an alphabet: *diacritics* and *digraphs*. A diacritic is any mark (accent, umlaut, tilde, etc.) which is added to a letter in order to

¹³⁵ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 29.

¹³⁶ Kenzhekhanuly, "Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms," 141.

indicate that that letter should be pronounced differently than the same letter without a mark.¹³⁷ For example, Spanish uses diacritics in the form of accents above its vowels (*á é í ó ú*) to show that a specific syllable should be stressed.

A digraph is a combination of two letters representing one sound, such as the individual letters *s* and *h* being combined in English to form the sound *sh* (e.g. *ship*).¹³⁸ In many languages, some digraphs are a single letter. This means that when these languages are written with the English alphabet, they must be represented by two English letters, as English lacks a single alphabetic character to express that language's sound. For example, Spanish *n* uses a diacritic called a tilde to form the letter *ñ* (e.g. *señor*). As the English alphabet does not have the letter *ñ*, it must be written with the digraph *ny* (e.g. *senyor*). When Germans use an English keyboard, it often does not have their umlauts *ä ö ü* (e.g. *über*), causing them to instead write the digraphs *ae*, *oe*, and *ue* respectively (e.g. *ueber*).

Before examining Uzbekistan's and Kazakhstan's various versions of the Latin alphabet, two important points need to be made about alphabet creation. Uzman writes that there are five principles to take into account when considering radical alphabet reform,¹³⁹ though this thesis is only concerned with the last two, as the other three lacked relevance within the context of this analysis.¹⁴⁰

Principle #4 states that punctuation marks, such as apostrophes, must not be part of a letter, either on top or below. Principle #5 states that letters must not be digraphs as much as possible.¹⁴¹ This is also called the principle of 'one sound – one letter', as opposed to a digraph being 'one sound –

¹³⁷ "Diacritic," Oxford Learners Dictionaries, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/diacritic?q=diacritic>.

¹³⁸ "Digraph," Oxford Learners Dictionaries, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/digraph?q=digraph>.

¹³⁹ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

¹⁴⁰ The other three state that the letters must 1) be taken as much as possible from one single writing system 2) be taken with their original phonetic equivalents and 3) not be similar to each other in shape. Principle 1 is satisfied, as letters are sourced exclusively from the Latin alphabet. In terms of Principle 2 the letters are taken with their original phonetic equivalents, but from various alphabets both English and Turkic. Less weight is given to principle 3 as it is highly subjective.

¹⁴¹ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

two letters’.¹⁴² A letter being a digraph means that the digraph is part of that language’s alphabet as an independent letter, rather than two separate letters. English does not have any of these, as we form all of our digraphs by combining two independent letters. In the past, the digraphs *ch* and *ll* were part of the Spanish alphabet and were considered independent letters from their individual characters of *c*, *h*, and *l*. Digraphs are to be avoided for several reasons. In the modern age, digraphs decrease digital efficiency by requiring two keystrokes instead of one, in addition to making printed works longer. Diacritics are often added to one of the letters in a digraph to make it a single letter, for example German *ae* adds an umlaut to become *ä*.

Below is the initial version of the modern Uzbek alphabet introduced in 1993:

A a, B b, C c, D d, E e, F f, G g, H h, I i, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, O o, P p, Q q, R r, S s, T t, U u, V v, X x, Y y, Z z, Ç ç, Ğ ğ, J̇ j̇, Ñ ñ, Ö ö, Ş ş,¹⁴³

The alphabet consists of 32 characters, 31 letters and an apostrophe. The apostrophe modifies the sound of a word, but it does not itself represent a sound like a normal letter. This 1993 version of the Uzbek alphabet satisfies the two main principles listed above. No punctuation marks are part of a letter and there are no digraphs, adhering to the principle of ‘one sound - one letter.’ Instead of digraphs, diacritics are used to indicate additional sounds. This version of the Uzbek alphabet is not dissimilar to the modern Turkish alphabet, used by Turkey since 1928.¹⁴⁴

A a, B b, C c, Ç ç, D d, E e, F f, G g, Ğ ğ, H h, I ı, İ i, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, O o, Ö ö, P p, R r, S s, Ş ş, T t, U u, Ü ü, V v, Y y, Z z¹⁴⁵

Around 1990, shortly before Uzbekistan gained its independence, Turkey began producing a large amount of publications discussing the adoption of the Latin alphabet with the message that the Latin alphabet is the most suited for Turkic languages, such as Uzbek and Kazakh.¹⁴⁶ Turkey

¹⁴² Татиля, и Кадыржанов, “Казахская латиница.”

¹⁴³ Uzman, “Romanisation in Uzbekistan,” 57.

¹⁴⁴ Landau, “Alphabet Reform,” 26.

¹⁴⁵ Simon Ager, “Turkish (Türkçe),” Omniglot - the online encyclopedia of writing systems and languages, 2020, <https://omniglot.com/writing/turkish.htm>.

¹⁴⁶ Космарский, “Смыслы латинизации,” 67.

apparently convinced Uzbekistan of this, as close relations between Turkey and Uzbekistan are thought to have played a key role in Uzbekistan's 1993 adoption of the Latin alphabet.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, before the alphabet could properly be implemented, relations with Turkey quickly worsened, causing Uzbekistan to switch in 1995 to a version that did not resemble the Turkish alphabet.¹⁴⁸

Below is the 1995 (and current) version of the Uzbek Latin alphabet:

A a, B b, D d, E e, F f, G g, H h, I i, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, O o, P p, Q q, R r, S s, T t, U u, V v, X x, Y y, Z z, O' o', G' g', Sh sh, Ch ch, Ng ng, '149

This version of the alphabet violates both of the previously mentioned key principles of alphabet creation. Apostrophes have become part of the letters *o'* and *g'* along with the addition of the digraph letters *sh*, *ch*, and *ng*. The digraphs *sh* and *ch* are especially poor choices for a Turkic language, as unlike English they can be used in every position of a word, leading to rather awkward combinations like *achchiq* (bitter) or *kushcha* (little bird).¹⁵⁰

The 1995 version of the alphabet has been heavily criticized by academics as having major defects and being inherently flawed,¹⁵¹ thus being one of the most conspicuous reasons that Uzbekistan's alphabet reform has not been considered successful.¹⁵² On May 21, 2019 a new, updated version of the Uzbek alphabet was posted on the Facebook page of Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature. This was developed with the purpose of furthering reform efforts:

A a, B b, C c, Ç ç, D d, E e, F f, G g, Ğ ğ, H h, I i, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, O o, Ó ó, P p, Q q, R r, S s, Ş ş, T t, U u, V v, X x, Y y, Z z, '153

¹⁴⁷ Dietrich, "Language Policy and Hegemony," 152.

¹⁴⁸ Schweitzer, "Alphabet Transition," 4.

¹⁴⁹ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

¹⁵⁰ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

¹⁵¹ Космарский, "Смыслы латинизации," 68; Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 58.

¹⁵² Татилia, и Кадыржанов, "Казахская латиница."

¹⁵³ Саодат Мухамедова, "Алишер Навоий номидаги Тошкент давлат ўзбек тили ва адабиёти университети ҳузурида иш олиб борган латин ёзувига асосланган ўзбек алифбосини ислоҳ қилиш бўйича ишчи гуруҳнинг хулосалари," O'zbek tili jonkuyarlari guruhi, Facebook, 21 мая 2019 года, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1693547400972545/permalink/2273086959685250/>.

This version of the alphabet should be more agreeable with scholars, as it omits digraphs by adhering to ‘one sound - one letter’. It remains to be seen whether the government will take concrete steps to adopt this recently proposed alphabet. As a side note, the Facebook post explaining the new Uzbek Latin alphabet was written almost entirely in Uzbek Cyrillic.

ii. Kazakhstan’s Latin Alphabets

The first version of Kazakhstan’s Latin alphabet was presented in September 2017:

A a, Ae ae, B b, C c, Ch ch, D d, E e, F f, G g, Gh gh, H h, I i, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, Ng ng, O o, Oe oe, P p, Q q, R r, S s, Sh sh, T t, U u, Ue ue, V v, W w, Y y, Z z, Zh zh¹⁵⁴

With no less than eight digraphs, this version of the Kazakh alphabet repeatedly violates the ‘one sound – one letter’ principle. It was decided when creating the alphabet that there should be no diacritics. There was concern that if Kazakh speakers started typing letters without remembering or bothering to use diacritics, then it would cause Kazakh-specific sounds to begin disappearing from the language.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, because there are no diacritics, this version can be typed on any Latin alphabet keyboard. A further issue which quickly presented itself is that the digraphs caused some Kazakh words to be spelled rather uncomfortably in the Latin alphabet.

For example, the Kazakh word for ‘carrot’ is written in Cyrillic as *сәбіз* (*säbiz*). When transliterated using this version of the Kazakh Latin alphabet, *сәбіз* becomes *saebiz*.¹⁵⁶ Incidentally, *saebiz* in the Kazakh Latin alphabet sounds exactly like the Russian word *заебись* (*zaebis’*) which is one way to express the word ‘fuck’ in Russian. As virtually all residents within Kazakhstan understand Russian, this was seen as a problem. Not all respondents disliked this alphabet though; RS1 stated that it was the simplest version, financially minimal, and understandable. However, a new version of the Latin alphabet was quickly proposed in October 2017:

¹⁵⁴ Тамара Вааль, “Главное не торопиться: казахский алфавит на латинице презентован в парламенте,” Аналитический интернет-журнал Власть, 11 сентября 2017 года, <https://vlast.kz/obshchestvo/24755-glavnoe-netoropitsa-kazahskij-alfavit-na-latinice-prezentovan-v-parlamente.html>.

¹⁵⁵ “Draft of New Latin-Based Kazakh Alphabet Revealed,” Kazinform - International News Agency, September 11, 2017, https://www.inform.kz/en/draft-of-new-latin-based-kazakh-alphabet-revealed_a3063712.

¹⁵⁶ Кадыржанов, “Модернизация общественного сознания,” 34.

A a, A' a', B b, D d, E e, F f, G g, G' g', H h, I i, I' i', J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, N' n', O o, O' o', P p, Q q, R r, S s, S' s', C' c', T t, U u, U' u', V v, , Y y, Y' y', Z z¹⁵⁷

If the first alphabet completely disregarded principle #5 of having no digraphs, then this one completely disregarded principle #4 of having no punctuation marks as forming parts of letters; there are nine of them here. Many respondents such as DV, KA, RS1, and AE expressed their displeasure with this version of the alphabet. After experiencing large scale mockery and ridicule regarding the second version with apostrophes, a third alphabet was presented on February 20, 2018:

A a, Á á, B b, D d, E e, F f, G g, G' g', H h, I i, I ı, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, N' n', O o, Ó ó, P p, Q q, R r, S s, T t, U u, Ú ú, V v, Y y, Ý ý, Z z, Sh sh, Ch ch¹⁵⁸

No punctuation marks are present, but the digraphs *sh* and *ch* have been brought back. A further issue is that accent marks are used for both consonants and vowels, which can be confusing. AK1 finds this misleading as the accent marks above consonants make it look like they should affect the word's stress, but they do not as they represent a completely different letter. KA said that they find the letters *u*, *ú*, and *y* to be confusing. Duisenov says that this version is simply a terrible transliteration of the Cyrillic alphabet, while Kadyrzhanov refers to it as “uncomfortable and unaesthetic,” saying that the existing Turkish alphabet should be used with minimal additions. Respondents DN, YT, and BB also expressed the opinion that a Turkish-based alphabet is desirable.

It seems the wish of a Turkish-based alphabet may be granted. On October 21, 2019, President Tokayev noted the shortcomings of the current version of the Latin alphabet and called for a new one to be developed. On November 6, 2019 a fourth version of the Kazakh Latin alphabet was presented by the Baitursynov Institute for Linguistics:

¹⁵⁷ Diana Kudaibergenova, “Kazakhstan's New Latin Alphabet Project Spurs Discussions Online,” *Voices On Central Asia*, January 23, 2018, <https://voicesoncentralasia.org/kazakhstans-new-latin-alphabet-project-spurs-discussions-online/>.

¹⁵⁸ “Kazakhstan Changes Its Alphabet. Again!” *Eurasianet*, February 20, 2018, <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-changes-its-alphabet-again>.

A a, Ä ä, B b, Ç ç, D d, E e, F f, G g, Ğ ğ, H h, İ i, I ı, Y y, J j, K k, Q q, L l, M m, N n, D ɗ, O o, Ö ö, P p, R r, S s, Ş ş, T t, U u, Ü ü, V v, W w, Z z¹⁵⁹

This version of the alphabet is much more well thought-out and prepared than the previous three. Here principle #4 of no punctuation letters is upheld, principle #5 of no digraphs is observed, meaning the alphabet has achieved ‘one sound – one letter’, and it is based on the Turkish alphabet. Experts say that this version will also be able to regulate vowel harmony, an important phonetic feature of many Turkic languages.¹⁶⁰ HA wrote that this latest version of the alphabet will be officially considered by a national transition commission in June.¹⁶¹

Developing one alphabet for one language within a country is challenging, but attempting to reform two alphabets at the same time has produced negative results in the past. Karakalpakstan, where the language Karakalpak is spoken, is an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan. In the 1990s, Uzbekistan simultaneously tried to transition Uzbek and Karakalpak from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. Unfortunately, all this served to do was make the orthography of both Uzbek and Karakalpak more confusing, making many words become almost twice as long when using the digraphs that were introduced.¹⁶² Therefore, it is indeed in the best interests of ethnic languages if they continue to use Cyrillic. The ethnic languages of Dungan and Uighur remaining in Cyrillic will allow resources to be focused solely on the Kazakh language, thereby raising the chances of a successful alphabet reform.

There are two factors addressed earlier though that could seriously endanger the success of the alphabet reform: a failure to prohibit the old Cyrillic alphabet, and the widespread use of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. In Uzbekistan, the younger generation indirectly supports the use of Cyrillic by being forced to learn it, as a lot of information in Uzbekistan is still produced in Cyrillic. Should the younger generation, and the generation after them continue to use Cyrillic, it could mean dragging out the reform for a very long time (decades for example) or theoretically it

¹⁵⁹ Yergaliyeva, “Fourth Version of Kazakh Latin Script.”

¹⁶⁰ Yergaliyeva, “Fourth Version of Kazakh Latin Script.”

¹⁶¹ After conducting a search in English, Russian, and Kazakh, the author has been unable to locate any records online about whether this commission meeting went ahead; it was most likely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁶² Kenzhekhanuly, “Ideologies and Alphabet Reforms,” 141.

could go on indefinitely. Because of this, it is necessary for the government to reduce the use of Cyrillic, making it practically invisible, and bring the new Latin alphabet to the foreground.¹⁶³ Uzman argues that another reason for the slow pace of transition in Uzbekistan is the influence of the Russian language, written in Cyrillic.¹⁶⁴ In Kazakhstan this could be even more problematic. Supposing that the government could push Kazakh Cyrillic into the background, residents will still be seeing Russian Cyrillic quite often, thereby making it harder to transition to an entirely new alphabet.

In this section a linguistic history of the modern Uzbek and Kazakh Latin alphabets has been examined. Uzbekistan is on their third version of the Latin alphabet, while Kazakhstan is on their fourth. However, it took Uzbekistan almost thirty years to develop an alphabet that satisfies the principles of no letters that include punctuation and no digraphs. Kazakhstan has done the same in approximately two years, which seems promising. Furthermore, President Tokayev stated on June 3, 2020 that Kazakhstani authorities intend to carefully carry out the reform without rushing the process, taking into account the experiences of other Central Asian countries.¹⁶⁵

Therefore, although Kazakhstan, like Uzbekistan, commenced reform on rocky grounds with various versions of the Latin alphabet, the government is attempting to correct these mistakes much quicker. As a point of distinction, then, this may imply that the alphabet itself will not be detrimental to the success of Kazakhstan's alphabet reform. What will have to be addressed are the issues of Cyrillic proscription for Kazakh, and the constant presence of the Cyrillic alphabet in the form of Russian. These are seemingly at odds with each other, and there is currently no clear solution.

¹⁶³ Кадыржанов, "Переход на латиницу," 107-108.

¹⁶⁴ Uzman, "Romanisation in Uzbekistan," 59.

¹⁶⁵ "В Казахстане оценили последствия перехода на латиницу для русского языка," LENTA.RU, 23 июня 2020 года, <https://lenta.ru/news/2020/06/23/otkaz/>.

VII. UZBEKISTAN / OTHER NATIONS: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW

This results section and subsequent discussion correspond to the Uzbekistan / Other Nations section of the survey. This section was mainly used to provide ideas and data for the other four sections of the survey in order to have a case study which Kazakhstan's reform could be compared to. In other words, this is primarily an auxiliary section. Nevertheless, some questions in this section did yield data which has not been addressed yet. That data will be presented here followed by a brief discussion exploring a possible solution to Uzbekistan's current Latinization issue.

a. RESULTS

Although Kazakhstani representatives have travelled to other Turkic countries to analyze their alphabet reform,¹⁶⁶ respondents believe that this is not assisting officials in creating a more effective reform plan for Kazakhstan. In fact, 42% of respondents believe that Kazakhstan is not learning from other countries' Latinization experience, while 29% believe that they definitely are, and 29% believe they are learning to some degree. AA believes that by studying the experiences of other countries, Kazakhstan has realized that the reform cannot be rushed, and must be done in slow steps. AX3, a linguist in Kazakhstan, says that Kazakhstan has looked especially closely at the alphabets of other Turkic countries.

When asked directly whether they consider Uzbekistan's alphabet reform to be a failure, 48% of respondents answered yes, 38% said no, and 14% said it is partially a failure. One respondent, AM, has continued to read Uzbek in Cyrillic, not even realizing that any alphabet reform has taken place. AK1 possibly considers Uzbekistan's reform to be a failure, due to the large amount of Uzbek Cyrillic comments they see online. Kadyrzhanov wrote that while many people in Kazakhstan and Russia consider Uzbekistan's alphabet reform to be a failure, that Uzbekistanis themselves do not believe this. Of the 48% of respondents who do believe that Uzbekistan's alphabet reform has failed, 58% believe that Kazakhstan has not learned from Uzbekistan's mistakes.

¹⁶⁶ Landau, "Alphabet Reform," 29; Кадыржанов, "Переход на латиницу," 100.

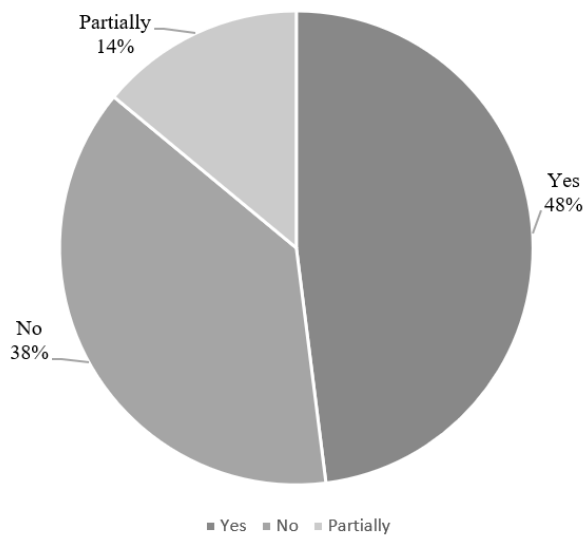


Fig. 24. Respondent's Opinion on Whether Uzbekistan's Alphabet Reform Ought to be Considered a Failure.

Interestingly, when asked whether they believe Uzbekistan's alphabet reform will be completed soon, 63% of respondents said yes, while 37% said no. A potential reason for this statistic comes from GM1, who says that the alphabet reform is naturally being completed as members of the older generation who are more well versed in the Cyrillic alphabet begin to be overtaken by the younger generation who knows the Latin alphabet better. GM1 (and other respondents) may not realize that the ubiquitousness of Cyrillic in Uzbekistan forces young people to use it as well.

b. DISCUSSION: POSSIBLE FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND THE SERBIAN MODEL

Many respondents including ZA, YT, Kadyrzhanov, and Duisenov commented that there is a significant chance that Kazakhstan may end up in the same situation as Uzbekistan regarding their alphabet reform. It is worthwhile to examine this possibility within the light of the complications inherent in Uzbekistan's reform program. Ways to address these difficulties can be considered here, should Kazakhstan ever end up in the same situation. One possible solution, or policy, which could improve Uzbekistan's reform prospects – and by extension Kazakhstan's – is to be found in the Serbian model of functionally using two official alphabets.

To review, Uzbekistan's education sphere almost exclusively uses the Latin alphabet while most of the country's governmental work is carried out in Cyrillic. This has given rise to intergenerational cross-literacy where the younger and older generations can use both alphabets to some degree, with the younger generation preferring Latin and the older generation preferring Cyrillic. The alphabet reform may conclude when the younger generation overtakes the older one,

but as the younger generation also uses Cyrillic, it is possible for the reform to extend indefinitely.¹⁶⁷ Banning Cyrillic is a possible option, though Uzbekistan’s reluctance to do this thus far indicates that it may never happen. If Uzbekistan is not able to complete the switch to the Latin alphabet, nor revert back to Cyrillic, perhaps it is time to declare both alphabets official.

In Serbia both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets are accepted as correct and proper when using the Serbian language, and virtually all Serbs are well-versed in both. Signs in Serbia have information written first in the Cyrillic alphabet and then in Latin. In school, Serbs first learn Cyrillic, and then later the Latin alphabet. Adult Serbs in their daily lives will use both alphabets for different purposes. Dunja Jašović, a 21-year-old student from Belgrade, says that when she studies or writes notes she uses Cyrillic, but when she is on the internet, she uses the Latin alphabet.¹⁶⁸



Fig. 25. Signs in Belgrade, Serbia. Information is written first in Cyrillic, then the Latin alphabet. Courtesy of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.

Uzbekistan could use Serbia’s model as a solution to its problem of completing its alphabet reform. As mentioned earlier, the period of time when two alphabets are used during an alphabet reform is called diachronic digraphia. But there is also synchronic digraphia, where two alphabets for one

¹⁶⁷ Кадыржанов, “Переход на латиницу,” 101-108.

¹⁶⁸ Alan Crosby, and Iva Martinović. “In The Age Of The Internet, Serbia Aims To Keep Its Cyrillic Alive.” Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, August 28, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/in-the-age-of-the-internet-serbia-aims-to-keep-its-cyrillic-alive/29458055.html>.

language officially co-exist. Serbia's approach is a perfect example of synchronic digraphia. If Uzbekistan is reluctant to take action to move either forwards or backwards with its alphabet reform, then it could declare the co-existence of both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. If Kazakhstan should ever end up in Uzbekistan's current situation, then it would have an example of a Turkic country which has already officially implemented two alphabets. Kazakhstanis might agree with this as well, seeing as how 60% of survey respondents said that they would support a two-alphabet system for Uzbekistan in the style of Serbian synchronic digraphia (33% did not, 7% possibly would). There are of course many factors that are different between Serbia and Uzbekistan which could affect the viability of this option, meaning that this solution requires more research before it can be considered in any official capacity.

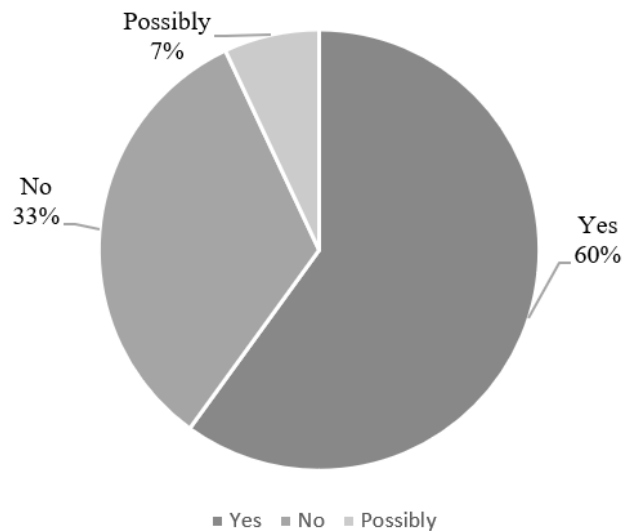


Fig. 26. Percentage of Respondents who would Support a Two Alphabet System.

VIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Alphabet reforms as conducted by nation states, are phenomena worthy of study. Such reforms significantly affect most spheres of society, and they often speak to particular histories concerning identity; both individual and national. Over the past century, a number of reforms (or attempts thereof) can be identified. This thesis specifically examined two contemporary reform programs, initiated by the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan (in 1993) and Kazakhstan (in 2017). Uzbekistan's reform is ongoing to this day and seems to exist in a state of eternal limbo. There has been a general failure to successfully and completely implement a new alphabet there, as well as a widespread and institutionalized aversion to abandoning the old one. Diachronic digraphia can be used as a measure of success here.

Kazakhstan's policymakers have an opportunity to examine the tumultuous situation in Uzbekistan, and implement a more effective strategy based on that analysis. An evaluation of the current policies and trends within Kazakhstani society allows us to consider whether or not the reform will, in fact, be more successful. To provide a starting point for data collection, a study of secondary literature with respect to Uzbekistan's and Kazakhstan's past and ongoing reform attempts revealed four overarching factors to consider when evaluating prospects of a successful and comprehensive reform. These are seen as the most significant and relevant for the immediate study, but this may not be exhaustive. The factors have been identified as public opinion, politics, education, and linguistics. They are broad enough so as to be applicable to the Kazakhstani context, for the purposes of the comparative study. Through the creation of an online survey distributed to persons within Kazakhstan, data was collected on these matters. With the medium of the survey and its open-ended nature, it was possible to ask more specific, context-sensitive questions which may have revealed problems endemic to Kazakhstan's reform process.

The results of this research indicate that public support and perception of the alphabet reform must be improved from a governmental standpoint, and this is particularly applicable to young people. This may be done by utilizing social media, as this information channel is seen by many respondents as being quite influential in the continuing discourse on Latinization. Education is a factor which requires a high level of attention, and respondents have indicated that there remain many unknowns that need to be addressed, such as the dissemination of materials in the new

alphabet. These include improving the prestige of the Kazakh language itself and developing a comprehensive plan to teach the new alphabet both to students and working adults. Politically, it is not an absolute necessity that the reform be democratic, but a government initiating a non-democratic alphabet reform must be determined to thoughtfully plan and carry out the reform. This includes proper financial planning and ensuring that government workers themselves will lead by example by using the new alphabet. Additionally, the government must be transparent and regularly update the public on the status of the reform. In the realm of linguistics, the earlier that a well-suited alphabet for Kazakh is developed, the better the chances of the reform's success.

Kazakhstan's alphabet reform commenced rather awkwardly, with the repetition of several of the mistakes that Uzbekistan's government has made in the past. These include a dearth of publicly available information and the repeated revision of a new version of the Latin alphabet. However, Kazakhstan has since taken steps to improve its chances of success and escape reform stagnation. It seems this improvement is largely due to the administration's prudence in taking the time and effort to ensure that Kazakhstan's alphabet reform is completed in an unhurried manner, carefully inspecting details of the planning process. This is a positive development, as the effects of COVID-19 have taken their toll on Kazakhstan's economy and any previously created budgets and deadlines will mostly likely be subject to revision. One positive aspect of this is that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's administration will have the opportunity to redesign the reform based on their requirements and beliefs, as opposed to continuing the plan developed under the administration of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

It is difficult to definitively predict whether these preparations will prove to be effective in facilitating successful reform; only time will disclose this. By paying heed to the complications that have beset reform within Uzbekistan as well as the issues highlighted in this study, however, Kazakhstan's policymakers ought to be in a position to implement a more successful program. In the event of an unsuccessful or protracted reform, the Serbian model of synchronic digraphia represents a road to compromise that has at least preliminary support amongst respondents. Further investigation into this may therefore prove valuable in the field of alphabet reform.

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X. APPENDIX

The tally of responses received, out of 75, are listed at the end of each question for which a percentage is given in the analysis.

English Survey

General Questions

1. Do you consent to the information on this survey being used for research purposes?
2. Are you okay with possibly being contacted to discuss your answers to the following questions? If yes, please write your e-mail address: _____
3. 1. What is your first and last name? 2. What is your work/occupation? (68) 3. How old are you? (69) 4. Where are you from / Where do you live (city/country)? (69)
4. If you feel comfortable answering, what is your ethnicity? (you may provide more than one answer) (71)
5. What is your mother tongue, and why do you consider it to be your mother tongue? (you may provide more than one answer) (75)
6. What was the primary language of instruction when you were attending school? (75)
7. What foreign languages did you study at either school or university? (75)
8. Please rate on a scale of 1-10 (10 = best) your level of Russian, Kazakh, and any other language that you speak (including local ethnic languages). (75)
9. What language do you speak at home? (75)
10. What language do you speak with your peers? (73)
11. How do you feel about Kazakhstan switching to the Latin alphabet? Are you for or against this decision? Why? (75)
12. What are the benefits of transitioning to the Latin alphabet? (53)
13. What are the downsides of transitioning to the Latin alphabet? (57)
14. What do you think is the general public opinion about the alphabet switch? (68)
15. One of the main arguments for switching to the Latin alphabet is that it will make the Kazakh language more technologically compatible with things like computer programs, the internet, and keyboards. What is your opinion on this? Do you agree? (66)
16. What role do you think social media and public online discussion have played in selecting and adopting the new Latin alphabet? (58)

17. Do you believe that the older generation will be able to successfully learn and use the Latin alphabet? (73)
18. Do you believe that it will be easy for people (of all ages) to learn the new Latin-based alphabet, given that they already frequently use the Latin alphabet for things like technology (e.g. internet)? (71)
19. Do you see Kazakhstan's transition to the Latin alphabet as a political statement against Russia? Do other people see it that way, and if yes, who? (63)

Education

20. To the best of your knowledge, how many levels of Kazakh education (grade school through university) are currently using or are trying to introduce the new alphabet?
21. Do you believe the transition to the new alphabet will go smoothly for university students? (70)
22. Do you believe the transition to the new alphabet will go smoothly for grade-schoolers (ages 5-18)? (59)
23. What is the current situation regarding acquiring and accessing learning materials such as textbooks in the new Kazakh Latin alphabet?
24. Will adopting the Latin alphabet inspire more people and immigrants in Kazakhstan to learn Kazakh? (instead of just using Russian or English) (66)
25. How does the government plan to train people not in school (such as working adults) to use the new alphabet? Are they expected to just learn it on their own? Will the government provide free classes to learn the new alphabet?

Politics

26. Do you consider the decision to transition to the Latin alphabet a democratic one? Did the government consult the public about the decision? (55)
27. Do you foresee the switch to the Latin alphabet being completed in a timely manner? (48)
28. Will the government continue to delay the complete switch? (moving current deadline from 2025) (45)

29. Do you believe that politicians/ the government are truly determined to transition to the new alphabet in a quick and effective manner? (48)
30. The transition of official records such as passports and IDs into the Latin alphabet is set to take place from 2021-2023. How likely is it that this task will be completed in this time period? (53)
31. Do you anticipate any financial problems for Kazakhstan during the course of its transition? (61)
32. Has the government been doing a good job of keeping people informed on the progress of the transition to the Latin alphabet? (54)

Linguistics

33. Will local languages such as Dungan continue to use the Cyrillic alphabet? Will there ever be any government pressure to switch them to the Latin alphabet? (43)
34. Will the government ever forbid the use of Cyrillic for the Kazakh language in order to finalize the switch to the Latin alphabet? (52)
35. Is there currently any plan to transliterate and reprint existing Cyrillic Kazakh literature?
36. To the best of your knowledge, how many versions of the new Kazakh Latin alphabet have been created so far? Is there any feature that is especially good or bad about any of them?
37. Are you satisfied with the current Kazakh Latin alphabet? Would you make any changes to it?
38. Have any alternatives to the Latin alphabet been proposed? The Arabic alphabet?
39. Who has been involved with the linguistic process of developing Kazakhstan's new alphabet? Private individuals hired by the government? A university department?
40. Does the ubiquitousness of the Russian language in Kazakhstan make it more difficult to use a Latin-based alphabet for the Kazakh language? (50)

Uzbekistan / Other Nations

41. How is Kazakhstan learning from the successes of other countries that have reformed their alphabet such as Azerbaijan and Turkey? (24)

42. What would you consider to be an unsuccessful alphabet reform?
43. Do you consider Uzbekistan's alphabet reform to be a failure? (29)
44. If you answered "yes" to the previous question: do you believe that Kazakhstan has learned from Uzbekistan's 'failure' to transition to the Latin alphabet? (14)
45. What do you believe is the most serious mistake that Uzbekistan has made during its transition to the Latin alphabet? Will Kazakhstan be able to avoid this mistake?
46. What do you believe is the main reason or reasons that Uzbekistan switched to the Latin alphabet? Does this differ very much from Kazakhstan's reasons?
47. Do you believe that Uzbekistan's alphabet reform will be completed soon? (19)
48. How do you think the difference in time period (1993 vs. 2017) affects the transition to the Latin alphabet for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan?
49. Kazakh and Uzbek are both Turkic languages; how does Kazakhstan's new Latin alphabet compare with Uzbekistan's?
50. Are there factors specific to either Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan which make switching to the Latin alphabet more difficult for that country? (e.g. It's more difficult for Uzbekistan because it has a larger population)
51. Serbia has developed a functional system of simultaneously using the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. Why has Uzbekistan not tried to do something like this? Would it be better for them to attempt something like this now? (15)

52. Do you have additional comments, notes, or anything else that you would like to add for me to know? Do you have any questions for me? (I will try to answer as soon as possible)

Русский опрос

Общие Вопросы

1. Согласны ли вы с тем, что информация данного опроса будет использована для исследовательских целей?
2. Не возражаете ли вы о возможной обратной связи с целью обсуждения ваших ответов на последующие вопросы? Если нет, пожалуйста, укажите свой e-mail адрес: _____
3. Как вас зовут и какая у вас фамилия? Какая у вас работа/вид деятельности? (68)
Сколько вам лет? (69) Откуда вы (город/страна)? (69)
4. Если вас не затруднит ответить, какая у вас этническая принадлежность? (можете предоставить больше одного варианта ответа) (71)
5. Какой у вас родной язык, и почему вы считаете его родным языком? (вы можете предоставить более одного ответа) (75)
6. На каком языке вы обучались в школе? (75)
7. Какие иностранные языки вы изучали в школе или в университете? (75)
8. Пожалуйста, оцените от 1 до 10 (10 = наилучшее значение) ваш уровень владения русским, -казахским языками, и любого другого языка, на котором вы говорите (включая местный этнический язык). (75)
9. На каком языке вы говорите дома? (75)
10. На каком языке вы говорите со своими сверстниками? (73)
11. Как вы относитесь к переходу казахского языка на латинский алфавит? Вы за или против данного решения? Почему? (75)
12. Какие есть преимущества перехода на латинский алфавит? (53)
13. Какие есть недостатки перехода на латинский алфавит? (57)
14. Как вы думаете, какое общее мнение общественности об изменении алфавита? (68)
15. Одним из главных аргументов за переход на латиницу является то, что это будет способствовать тому, что казахский язык станет более сопоставим с технологической точки зрения с такими вещами, как компьютерные программы, интернет и клавиатуры. Каково ваше мнение об этом? Вы согласны? (66)

16. Как вы думаете, какую роль сыграли социальные сети и общественная онлайн дискуссия в выборе и адаптации к новому латинскому алфавиту? (58)
17. Считаете ли вы, что старшее поколение сможет успешно выучить и использовать латинский алфавит? (73)
18. Думаете ли вы, что, люди (всех возрастов) легко выучат новый алфавит, основанный на латинице, учитывая уже частое использование латинского алфавита скажем, для технологий (например, интернета)? (71)
19. Рассматриваете ли вы переход Казахстана к латинскому алфавиту в качестве политического заявления против России? Рассматривают ли это в таком русле другие люди, если да, то кто? (63)

Образование

20. Насколько вам это известно, как много уровней казахского образования (с начальной школы до университета) в настоящее время используют или стараются представить новый латинский алфавит?
21. Считаете ли вы, что переход к новому алфавиту благополучно пройдет для студентов? (70)
22. Считаете ли вы, что переход к новому алфавиту благополучно пройдет для школьников? (59)
23. Какова нынешняя ситуация приобретения и доступа к обучающим материалам, таким, как учебные пособия на новом казахском латинском алфавите?
24. Вдохновит ли принятие латинского алфавита большее количество людей и иммигрантов в Казахстане выучить казахский язык? (вместо того, чтобы просто использовать русский или английский) (66)
25. Как правительство планирует обучать людей, не посещающих школу (таких, как работающие взрослые люди) использовать новый алфавит? Будут ли они просто обучаться этому сами? Предоставит ли правительство бесплатные занятия, чтобы выучить новый алфавит?

Политика

26. Рассматриваете ли вы решение о переходе к латинскому алфавиту демократическим? Советовалось ли правительство с общественностью касательно решения? (55)
27. Можете ли вы предвидеть, что переход к латинскому алфавиту будет осуществлен своевременно? (48)
28. Будет ли правительство продолжать продлевать заверченный переход? (передвигая существующий срок от 2025) (45)
29. Считаете ли вы, что политические деятели/правительство действительно настроены быстро и эффективно осуществить переход к новому алфавиту? (48)
30. Изменение официальных данных, таких, как паспортов и удостоверений на латинский алфавит установлено вступить в силу 2021-2023. Насколько это вероятно, что данная задача будет выполнена в установленный срок? (53)
31. Ожидаете ли вы финансовые проблемы для Казахстана, предстоящие во время периода перехода? (61)
32. Прodelывает ли правительство хорошую работу информирования населения касательно прогресса процесса перехода на латинский алфавит? (54)

Лингвистика

33. Продолжат ли местные языки, такие, как дунганский, использовать кириллический алфавит? Будет ли когда-либо оказано какое-нибудь давление со стороны государства с целью осуществления их перехода на латинский алфавит? (43)
34. Запретит ли когда-либо государство использование кириллицы для казахского языка, чтобы завершить процесс перехода на латинский алфавит? (52)
35. Есть ли в данный момент какой-нибудь план транслитерировать и переиздать существующую казахскую литературу на кириллице?
36. Насколько вам это известно, сколько версий казахского латинского алфавита уже было выработано на сейчас? Есть ли какая-нибудь черта какой-либо из этих версий, которая особенно хороша или плоха?

37. Довольны ли вы существующим казахским латинским алфавитом? Внесли бы вы какие-нибудь к нему изменения?
38. Были ли предложены какие-либо альтернативы латинскому алфавиту? Арабский алфавит?
39. Кто принимал участие в лингвистическом процессе разработки нового казахстанского алфавита? Физические лица, нанятые правительством? Департамент университета?
40. Осложняет ли еще больше повсеместное распространение русского языка в Казахстане использование алфавита казахского языка, основанного на латинице? (50)

Узбекистан / Другие государства

41. Как Казахстан перенимает успешный опыт других стран, реформировавших свой алфавит, таких, как Азербайджан и Турция? (24)
42. Что бы вы рассматривали в качестве неуспешной реформой алфавита?
43. Рассматриваете ли вы реформу алфавита в Узбекистане неудачей? (29)
44. Если вы ответили «да» на предыдущий вопрос: думаете ли вы, что Казахстан научился на «неудаче» Узбекистана к переходу на латинский алфавит? (14)
45. Как вы думаете, какая самая серьезная ошибка, которую совершил Узбекистан во время перехода на латинский алфавит? Сможет ли Казахстан избежать данную ошибку?
46. Как вы думаете, какая основная причина или причины перехода Узбекистана на латинский алфавит? Сильно ли это отличается от причины Казахстана?
47. Думаете ли вы, что реформа алфавита в Узбекистане будет завершена в скором времени? (19)
48. Как вы считаете, влияет ли разница во временном периоде (между 1993 и 2017) на переход на латинский алфавит для Казахстана и Узбекистана?
49. Казахский и узбекский язык – оба являются тюркскими языками; как сопоставим новый казахстанский латинский алфавит с узбекистанским?
50. Есть ли определенные факторы, специфичные для Казахстана или для Узбекистана, которые осложняют процесс перехода на латинский алфавит для той или иной

страны? (например, это сложнее для Узбекистана, потому, что у него больше населения)

51. Сербия выработала функциональную систему одновременно использования кириллического и латинского алфавитов. Почему Узбекистан не пытался сделать что-то подобное? Было бы ли для них лучше постараться осуществить что-то похожее сейчас? (15)

52. Есть ли у вас дополнительные комментарии, заметки, или что-нибудь еще добавить, что вы хотели бы, чтобы я узнал? Есть ли у вас ко мне какие-то вопросы? (Я постараюсь ответить на них как можно скорее)