

## Trilingual education development in universities of Kazakhstan

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This paper explores the rise of trilingual education in Kazakhstan and the results of the country's language policy on the classroom experience. Trinity of Languages is a state-sponsored initiative that offers a promising opportunity for young Kazakhs to thrive in today's competitive global marketplace. This paper emphasises the need for English learning in the Republic of Kazakhstan, despite the significance of Kazakh and Russian.

**Method:** To gauge students' interest in learning three languages, we analyse data from focus groups.

**Findings:** The survey findings lend substantial empirical support to the author's claims about the importance of implementing trilingual education in the academic sphere. Kazakhstan is currently implementing the teaching of three languages in schools. The research is grounded in the trilingual education model that draws on language's expressive, unifying, and integrative powers.

**Implications/Novel contribution:** A true picture of Kazakhstan's trilingual education landscape has emerged from this study. Students will use these findings to introduce contemporary methods of learning languages that focus on articulating and unifying language functions and on better understanding the paradigm of trilingual learning.

*Keywords:* Learning, English, Kazakh, Russian, Trilingual Education, University

**Received:** 18 December 2017 / **Accepted:** 16 January 2018 / **Published:** 20 February 2018

### INTRODUCTION

Formally, Kazakh, Russian, and English are all recognized languages in Kazakhstan. During the 12th session of the Assembly of Nations of Kazakhstan in October 2006, the status of these languages was proclaimed after President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev argued that the ability to speak at least three languages was crucial for the development of the next generation. Most of Kazakhstan's educational institutions are classified as bilingual, with Kazakh and Russian serving as working languages. As such, the national project "Trinity of Languages" highlights the importance of learning Kazakh as the country's official language. Since more than 130 nationalities are represented in Kazakhstan, Russian is the language of interethnic communication. Those who master English are better able to participate in the international economy.

Based on the information provided by the State Educational Authority, the percentage of Kazakh university students studying in multilingual settings has increased from 1.4% to 1.6%, while the percentage of teachers teaching in English has increased from 8.3% to 9.4%. Professionally Oriented Kazakh (Russian) Language and Professionally Oriented Foreign Language are two examples of new courses added to university curricula. Universities are also adopting a tiered approach to learning English that aligns with global benchmarks. Plans have been implemented to ensure universities achieve institutional and specialized accreditation in three languages. Most university-level textbooks are now available in Kazakh, Russian, and English translations.

With Kazakhstan undergoing such rapid transformation, it is of the utmost importance to fully appreciate and investigate the challenges involved in implementing a trilingual education system that mandates the study of the Motherland language and encourages the acquisition of a second and third language. It's important to remember that the current language policy seeks to promote mutually beneficial relationships between the Kazakh and Russian

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languages, which are widely spoken and highly influential due to their large populations. The Kazakh leader Nursultan Nazarbayev has been pushing for a trilingual education system since the country gained independence. In his opinion, everyone in Kazakhstan should try to learn English, Russian, and the Kazakh language. In accordance with the national project's "Trinity of Languages" principles, Kazakh is the state language, Russian is the official language, and English is the language of international communication (Boonyarattanasoontorn, 2017; Nazarbaev, 2007).

Kazakh and Russian are taught in schools from kindergarten through university. Kazakh is the language of instruction at all levels of education in Kazakhstan. Additionally, regardless of the language used in instruction, all schools teach the Kazakh language as an official language. In schools where Russian is the primary language, students receive instruction in Russian as their native tongue. The last ten years have seen an increase in innovative programmes in Kazakhstan, as the country's population shows a growing interest in learning three languages.

In Kazakhstan, the Nation Project of Language Education Advancement has been running since 2011 and will continue through 2020; it is a central pillar of the state's infrastructure for introducing trilingual education. Over the past 12 years, this is how many Officially Recognized Educational Instruments have been signed at the national level. The "Road Map" of trilingual education for 2015-2020 and its development's main directions are included in the State Development Program on Education and Science for 2016-2019. Within the context of the "Road Map," the new State Compulsory Standard of Education at the higher education level provides measures on adjustments to and new requirements for the higher education curriculum. There is 20 percent of classes taught in Kazakh and Russian (in Kazakh groups, Russian is used, and in Russian groups, Kazakh is used), and 30 percent are taught in English.

Trilingual education is available in Luxembourg, while countries like the United States, Canada, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Wales all offer bilingual programmes. Most of the population is trilingual, having mastered all three of Letzeburgesch, German, and French. As a result, the educational system has successfully adopted the three-language policy. The current European community actively encourages students to study multiple languages, both in and out of school. For people from all over the world to discuss various issues, it is based on the principle that the universal language spoken on the internet is English. However, the existence of other languages and the necessity of learning them are also acknowledged.

In higher education, there have been numerous examples of successful experimentation in this area. Young Europeans, it is hoped, will benefit culturally from Europe's plethora of languages (Williams, 1993).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers Krashen and McField (2005) asserted that the American public was under the impression that bilingual education did not work. Yet even a quick glance at the professional literature shows that it does. The research has reported that students in bilingual programs typically outpace their peers in all-English programs on tests of academic achievement in English. Or, at worst, they do just as well. Numerous reviews of the research have confirmed this conclusion. Several reviews of this kind have concluded that bilingual and multilingual education is more effective than all-English programs in helping students to acquire English and to progress academically.

At the same time a bilingual educator in Texas and a member of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education Tinajero (2005) considered the nation was leading the way toward a biliterate and multilingual America, as enrichment bilingual programs, both one-way and two-way, flourished throughout Texas. Americans should be grateful for the support that bilingual education has enjoyed in the state, unlike many others. While similar programs in other states are often challenged and even dismantled as in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts in much of Texas, students' bilingualism is used as a resource in the learning process. While rancorous political debates are raging elsewhere, with confusing claims and counterclaims about the value of bilingual education, Texas is poised to be the model, a paradigm of what is possible when children's cultural and linguistic diversity are treated as the assets they are. It is the potential in Texas to be a leader for the nation. For that to happen, however, the programs for English language learners need two things: a guarantee of adequate funding and a fair and rational system of accountability.

The discussed research is focused on using three languages in educational process: Kazakh, Russian, and English. Mathiot (1975) generally assume that a language fulfills expressive, unifying, and integrative functions. In

expressive function, a language expresses the intimate experiences and world views of its native speakers. This is essentially an in-group function (Nida & Wonderly, 1971), limited to the native speaker's circle of personal contacts. Even in a formal setting, native speakers generally use their language for expressive function. Kazakh language has been applying expressiveness in every domain of current life. In unifying function, a language supports the feeling of togetherness, the sense of kinship and unity of community. It may be an in-group or out-group functions involving both native and non-native speakers as the Russian language. Nida and Wonderly (1971) clearly distinguish in-group and out-group communication. In-group language, a language that is applied in any community for the basic face-to-face relationship with other speakers whom the individual in question fully identifies. Out-group language, people use it for contacting people of groups outside their own community. Russian supports a sense of uniqueness among nations. In integrative function, a language can serve to integrate non-native speakers within its related community. English performs an integrative function in Kazakhstan. The non-natives (Kazakhs, Russians) learn English to participate in the cultural, economic, or political events.

### **Kazakh and Russian**

Usage of the Kazakh language in higher schools is mainly shown in groups where medium of instruction is Kazakh and who mostly reads Kazakh language journals, books and scientific literature. In spite of medium of instruction, most of Kazakh students use Russian in the public domain. Kazakh and Russian are used as the media of instruction in all educational institutions of Kazakhstan.

### **English**

Compared with the use of Kazakh and Russian, English is also taught in our universities. Universities organize many English-speaking meetings, conferences, forums, seminars, in spite of the fact that there are slightly few native English speakers in Kazakhstan.

The language policy of Kazakhstan determines the necessity of a functional trilingual education model involving Kazakh (State), Russian (Official), and English (International), including the development of these language skills as reading, writing, listening, speaking.

## **CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This research presents trilingual educational model, which encompasses expressive, unifying and integrative functions of languages. These functions allow developing all language skills (Figure 1).

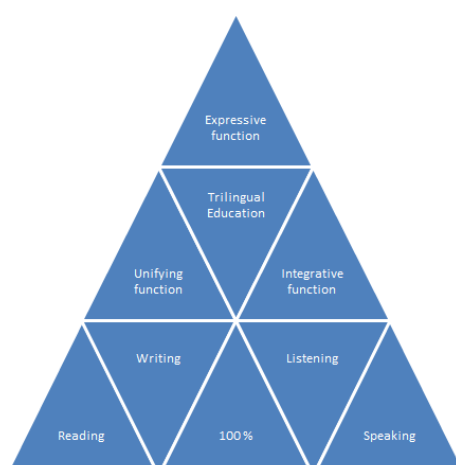


Figure 1. Trilingual education model

Based on the trilingual education model, each citizen of Kazakhstan is able to improve language skills not only in Kazakh and Russian, but also in English. This mentioned model assists to perform all language functions. By using the language for different purposes, it is important to mention language functions. Language function helps to see the point of view, to give advice or to come to an agreement. The functional use of language is not only based

on certain language structure or grammatical rules, but it is aimed at understanding the context and the usage of the language (Cook, 1985).

Expressive function is one of basic functions in linguistics. A thought has to be expressed verbally before it can be verbally communicated. Therefore, expression is a prerequisite for communication. Expression is the individual act that comes before the social act of communication. While the relationship between individuals in society is the dimension of communication, the relationship between a language and thoughts in the individual's linguistic act (or "speech act") is the dimension of expression (Wilkinson & Walsh, 2015).

The Kazakh language plays an expressive function in this research. A great number of people are studying and living in a Kazakh environment. Owing to it, people can express their ideas and thoughts, argue and prove their points of view, develop the usage of the Kazakh language in writing, and communicate with other Kazakh people. In recent years, the Kazakh language has gradually been introduced as the language of choice, especially in areas with the dominant Kazakh population, as it is in the south and in the west of the country <https://goo.gl/lds9PG>. According to the census of Kazakhstan population 2016, the number of Kazakh people is 63, 1%; and Russians-23.7% (Table 1).

Table 1: Kazakhstan population in 2016 by ethnic groups

Kazakhs	63.1%
Russians	23.7%
Uzbeks	2.9%
Ukrainians	2.1%
Uygurs	1.4%
Tatars	1.3%
Germans	1.1%

The 1996 presidential Concept of the Language Policy outlines the steps to be taken in order to ensure the Kazakh language domination. The document provides that a list of professions and positions should be prepared for which the knowledge of the state language would be necessary. The laws of the Republic should then state this list. Such approaches lead to the creation of strong economic and social incentives for people to master the Kazakh language. Further, the concept to increase the compulsory use of the Kazakh language was developed in the 1998 Presidential Decree on Functioning and Development of Languages. It emphasizes "the increasing demands for the use of the state language" (Dave, 2003). In terms of professional use, the Decree calls for all the government paperwork to be done in Kazakh. According to the Decree, good conditions will be created for the use of the Kazakh language in science, education, culture, state administration, mass media and international relations. The Decree also demands provision of free Kazakh language instruction, so that the usage in the public sphere will be expanded. These provisions indicate a will to broaden the obligatory public usage of Kazakh (Commercio, 2004).

Unifying function is performed by the standard language in uniting speakers of various dialects within a single community oriented toward the standard (Mathiot, 1975). According to statistics, Kazakhstan has about 63.1 percent ethnic Kazakhs, 23.7 percent ethnic Russians, with Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uygurs, Tatars, Germans and other ethnic groups. The Russian language is widely used in business, government interactions and plays a role of unifying function. Linguistically, Kazakhstan was the most russified of all the Central Asian republics (Dave, 2003). Ethnological research in urban population estimated that 60-75% of Kazakhs spoke exclusively Russian (Dave, 2004). It is known, that Russian is still co-official and also widely spoken even by many (bilingual) ethnic Kazakhs. Most of Kazakhs often favor Russian over to Kazakh, even when communicating with family members (though this might not be representative). In addition, Russian serves as a lingua franca throughout Central Asia and since Kazakhstan is home to a very large number of ethnic groups, Russian serves as the primary language of inter-ethnic communication.

Integrative function involves the symbolic significance of a language for group solidarity, identity and socio-cultural integration at the local, regional or national levels across different language and social groups (Ammon, 2012).

"By studying the language and culture of other nations, a person becomes equal and will not need to make humble requests", said (Cartledge, 2005). The great poet and philosopher Abai Kunanbayev wrote in his works that

learning of Persian, Arabic and Russian languages was necessary in the development of the nation. Nevertheless, his words are applicable and relevant even nowadays, especially at the time when all significant events and processes in the world are held in the English language (Kunanbayeva, 2016).

English plays a role of an integrative function, because of its penetrating in our life. More than 450 million people around the world consider English as their native language and 98 million people as their second language. It is the most important language in more than 60 countries. English is the native language of 12 nations and the official and semi-official language of 33 additional nations. This means that every seventh person in the world speaks English. Knowledge of English can help to communicate in every imaginable situation at any point of the world. Thus, different languages depending upon the speech community and its social context may implement all of these functions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Today, Kazakh, Russian and English are to be used in scientific publications, in university guides, in names of faculties, and on web sites.

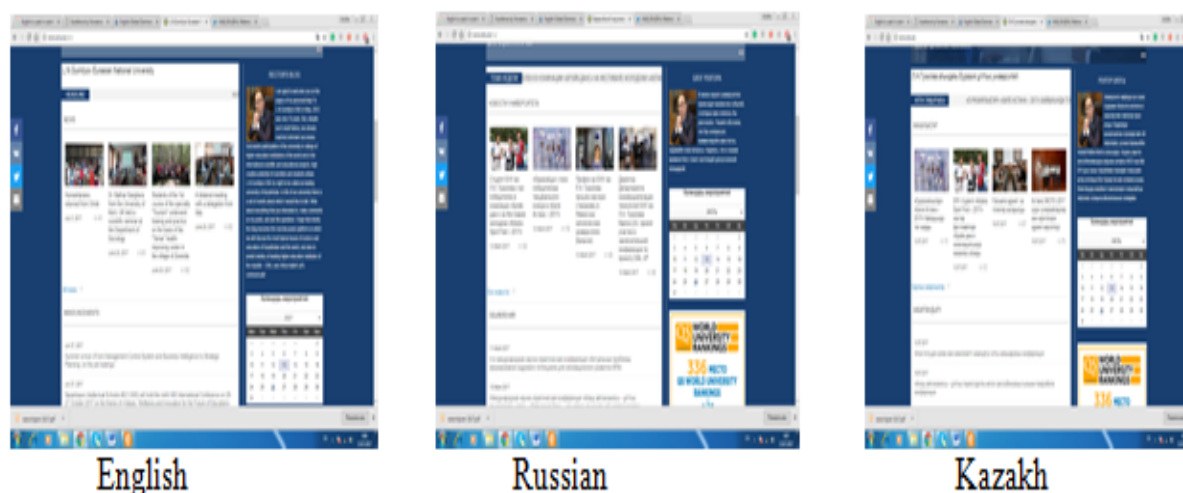


Figure 2. Kazakh, Russian and English

The increasing interest to the English language in higher educational institutions over the last few decades is a cumulative process resulting in academic communication worldwide. Universities in Kazakhstan deliver programs (online-seminars, webinars, evening clubs, and watching films) to learn English or materials to improve students language proficiency (papers, publications, guides, and books). Not only students, but also teachers are interested in learning English. Many international programs require the higher knowledge of English in order to study abroad or to be enrolled to the higher institutions. For this, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan awards scholarships and credits for postgraduates and doctoral studies; provides financial assistance for study trip abroad. For this purpose, students, postgraduates and teachers should know English and pass International Exams as IELTS or TOEFL. There are special requirements for teachers, scholars in order to get professor degree in university. One of the main requirements is to have three scientific papers or publications in international journals with a high impact factor. According to the world dynamics of publications, each year the amount of scientific works of Kazakhstani scholars are increasing in comparison with previous years (Table 2).

Table 2: The ranking of publications in web of science core collection

Years	Amount of Publications		The fraction of Kazakhstan (%)
	In Kazakhstan	In the World	Publications to the World
2012	749	2, 236768	0,033
2013	980	2, 327 292	0,042
2014	1,408	2, 400 237	0,058
2015	1 769	2 556 440	0,069
2016	1 773	2 493730	0,071

According to data offered by the Ministry of Education and Science, universities of Kazakhstan have expanded their multilingual groups since 2008. New subjects such as "Professionally Oriented Kazakh (Russian) Language" and "Professionally Oriented Foreign Language (English)" were introduced into educational curricula of universities. In the area of the development of international cooperation, the main task of state educational policy of Kazakhstan is to implement a complex of measures to create an integrated system of international linkages in the educational field, which would embrace both international and national markets for educational services (Kunanbayeva, 2016).

Professionally Oriented Foreign Language is taught for the second and third year students of non-linguistic specialties of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. The aim of this course is to prepare professionally qualified students with knowledge of English for their future profession and career. The students competence in skills development is measured by their ability to understand and produce written and spoken language in a professional context, to perform the following academic tasks:

- Reading and understanding written professional language.
- Writing assignments in an appropriate style for professional purposes.
- Listening and comprehending spoken professional language.
- Speaking on general and professional topics in formal and informal situations.

Thus, based on trilingual education model, students are able to improve their language skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Moreover, this model helps them to acquire language proficiency in Kazakh, Russian, and English. Owing to this model, expressive, unifying and integrative language functions are closely interrelated during the educational process. Students expand their grammar and vocabulary knowledge, review scientific papers, interpret the meanings of professional terminologies, and apply the received information for specific purposes.

## Discussion

This study of development of trilingual education in universities includes:

- Focus group interviews with 63 students of non-linguistic specialties;
- Questionnaire focusing on language attitudes and views of trilingual education.

The questionnaire allows collecting quantitative (and to some extent qualitative) data about the attitude towards trilingual education. Moreover, questionnaire gives possibility to deepen students attitudes towards learning three languages. The students of bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees took part in this questionnaire. There were 82, 5% of students aged from 16 to 20; 15, 9% aged from 21 to 30; and 1, 6% aged from 31 to 40. Among them were 66, 7% - female, 33, 3% - male.

The most interesting fact is that only 44, 3% of students speak Kazakh fluently, while 27, 9% are fluent in Kazakh, Russian and English. Only 16, 4% of students speak and understand Kazakh and Russian 52% of students speak Kazakh and Russian with friends and colleagues (Figure 3).

In spite of students preference to speak Kazakh and Russian with friends and colleagues, 79% of students are studied in multilingual groups in higher educational institutions. About 250 disciplines are taught in foreign languages in L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. There are some special requirements to study and to be enrolled in multilingual groups. According to the questionnaire, students need to have not only the special language certificate of passing International Examinations, but also the high scores of English knowledge (Figure 4).



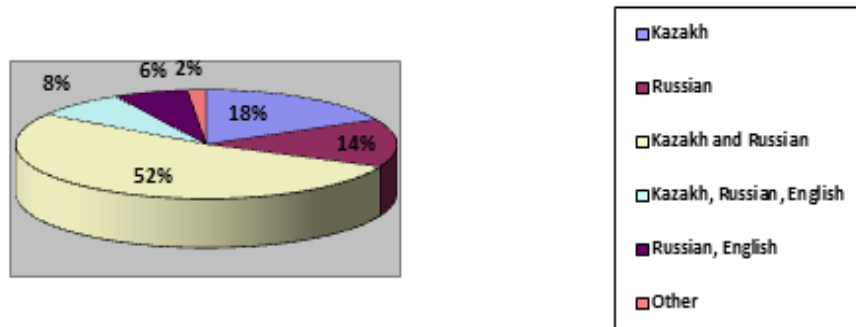


Figure 3. The pie chart of learning foreign languages

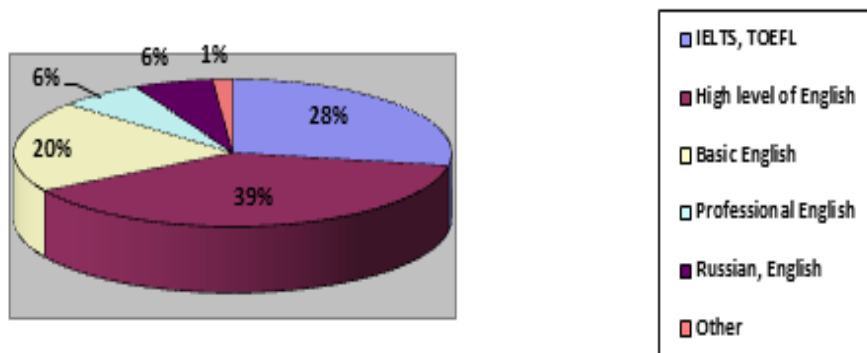


Figure 4. The pie chart to the requirements for training in multilingual groups

This is a great opportunity and incentive for students to learn English and study successfully. Every academic term students can participate in programs of academic mobility and continue their education in other universities of the world. Today, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University has made contracts with 116 universities around the world. According to the program of academic mobility, students should have 6, 0 and more points of IELTS for technical specialties; and 6,5 points for humanities. A study abroad by the academic mobility program encourages students to improve multiple perspectives, and know more alternative ways of learning.

English is one of the main subjects in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan. Students of all faculties learn English during the first and second year. As a result of a questionnaire, conducted among students, it was proven that English is more difficult to learn than Kazakh and Russian (Figure 5).

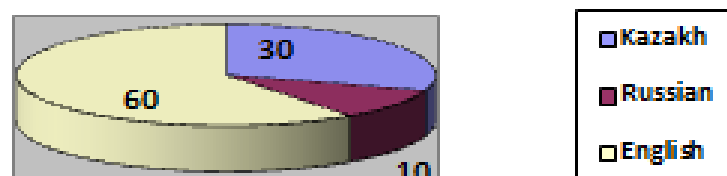


Figure 5. The pie chart of the most difficult languages

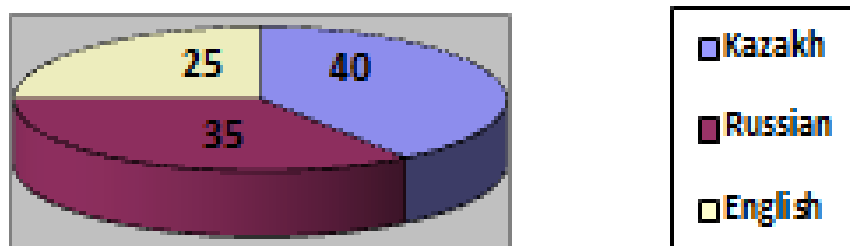


Figure 6. The pie chart of the most prestigious languages

According to the questionnaire, 60% of students choose English for the learning as the most difficult language in comparison with Kazakh (30%) and Russian (10%). Therefore, the prestigious language is considered Kazakh (40%). The reason is that the Kazakh language is closely connected with the group of Turkish languages. More than 100 nationalities live in Kazakhstan. Mongolian, Kyrgyz, Uygur, Turkish, Altaic (Finnish, Korean, Hungarian) languages are related to each other and have some similarities because of the borrowing words (Figure 6).

One of the questions of the questionnaire: "Why would students like to know three languages?" The students answered differently. It is known that students have definite goals in life and points of view. Nobody had the same point of view with regard to trilingual education.

### CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present research is devoted to developing a trilingual education in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan. The model of trilingual education allows adopting new techniques of teaching Kazakh, Russian and English languages based on expressive, unifying and integrative language functions. Each language is considered as a variable and an alternative medium of instruction at a particular educational level in education system of Kazakhstan.

The results of this research present the real picture of the current situation of trilingual education in Kazakhstan. This research shows that Kazakh, Russian and English languages in educational process fulfill expressive, unifying, and integrative language functions. Owing to these functions, the model of trilingual education presumes the obsessing of all language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). As a result of a survey, many students prefer to know three languages equally; to take much benefit for continuation of their study in universities of other countries; to be competitive at current integrated world; to study in multilingual groups of the university; to participate in International Programs; to pass International Exams and to get maximum points.

Developing and implementation of the model of trilingual education in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan speed up the improvement of language skills and updating of educational programs in all degrees (bachelor, master, and doctorate).

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