

# **Evaluation of State Language Skills Using the KAZTEST Method in Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan**

*Abdiyev Kali Seilbekovich,  
Abdykhalikov A.T.*

*National Testing Center of Ministry of Education  
and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
info@ncgsot.kz*

## **Abstract**

According to official information, people of 130 nationalities live in cosmopolitan Kazakhstan. The status of the state language in the country is defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the “Law on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan”. The Russian language is used equally with the state language in state organizations and local government organizations.

General usage of the Russian language started in the time when Kazakhstan was a part of the Soviet Union. The Russian language was the priority language instrument in all spheres of human life. After gaining the independence, the law defining the status of the state language was passed in the country. Today we have the following language situation in the country: people who studied at the time of the Soviet Union speak and use Russian; new generation uses the two languages.

The Government designed the State program of development and usage of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 which has increase of a number of adults speaking the state language as one of the targets. Regional state language teaching centers work all over the country; studying there is free. Therefore, citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan and foreign nationals who are engaged into activity in legal, economical, scientific, public, and other spheres in the territory of the state are expected to speak the Kazakh language good in accordance with the requirements to usage of the language.

The state language is officially supported by the government in Kazakhstan. Evaluation of Kazakh language skills will contribute to its development and growth of competitiveness in the language environment of the country and is one of the most important state measures to attain the objective of obligatory knowledge of the state language by citizens.

The mechanism of evaluation of Kazakh language skills in citizens of the country is the system measuring the level of the Kazakh language knowledge KAZTEST. To create the KAZTEST system, scientific research was held and institutional opportunities of the international language knowledge system of measurement of knowledge were studied.

The KAZTEST system consists of four parts: listening, lexical-grammatical block, reading, and writing.

In KAZTEST test taker has to make 150 tasks within 150 minutes; percent of language knowledge is estimated on the basis of answers. The peculiarity of KAZTEST is connected with technological efficiency that consists of simultaneous involvement of a large number of test takers, immediate processing and reporting the results.

The KAZTEST system is used to evaluate Kazakh language skills of applicants to the international scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan for studies and scientific training abroad and of civil servants taking high posts.

According to official information, people of 130 nationalities live in cosmopolitan Kazakhstan. The status of the state language in the country is defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the “Law on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan” [1]. The Russian language is used equally with the state language in state organizations and local government organizations [2].

General usage of the Russian language started in the time when Kazakhstan was a part of the Soviet Union. The Russian language was the priority language instrument in all spheres of human life. After gaining the independence, the law defining the status of the state language was passed in the country. Today we have the following language situation in the country: people who studied at the time of the Soviet Union speak and use Russian; new generation uses the two languages.

The State program for the development and functioning of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2001-2011 was presented by the State. The extension of it, the State program for the development and functioning of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 has been adopted [3], whose core factor is an increase of the share of adult population that speaks the state language. There is a network of regional centers teaching the state language free of charge all across the country. Accordingly, the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan and foreigners, carrying out legal, economic, scientific, public, and other activities in the territory of the State are assumed to speak the Kazakh language at the proper level and within the requirements to the language use.

The value of knowledge of the languages is considered from three standard positions:

- 1) Language education as the State value;
- 2) Language education as the social value;
- 3) Language education as the personal value.

The State language is officially supported by the State and provides implementation of the principles of the language policy in Kazakhstan. On the basis of this it is believed that the language level assessment will contribute to its development and raise its competitiveness in the Republican language environment; and be one of the significant State measures taken to achieve the objectives of compulsory knowledge of the State language for the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The State language mission is not only to strengthen the national unity of Kazakhstan, but also to direct at spiritual development of every citizen as an individual, who is a basis of the policy of forming a tolerant society.

The mechanism of evaluation of Kazakh language skills in citizens of the country is the system measuring the level of the Kazakh language knowledge KAZTEST.

In order to create the system, research work was carried out and the institutional capacity of the international systems evaluating the level of language knowledge that are used for many years such as:

1. TOEFL – (Test of English as a Foreign Language);
  2. IELTS – (International English Language Tests System);
  3. TRFL – (Test of Russian as a Foreign Language);
  4. DSH -(Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang );
  5. Grundbaustein DaF, Zertifikat Deutsch;
  6. DALF/ DELF (Diplome Approfondi de Langue Française/Diplome d'Etudes en Langue Française) ;
  7. TÖMER (Türkçe Öğretim Merkezi) etc.
- was investigated.

KAZTEST system is rather similar to TOEFL and TRFL system in its structure. The KAZTEST system similarities to listed-above systems:

- 1) Firstly, the given systems assess communicative competence, which is fundamental to language skills, such as listening, grammatical accuracy, reading, writing and speaking;
- 2) Secondly, the structure and content of the given systems grow to a certain gradation;

3) Thirdly, the Russian testing system of the Russian language knowledge is oriented at two directions: Russian and foreign citizens.

Due to the fact that KAZTEST follows the same principles, the experience of implementation of the mentioned systems is considered.

The primary target of the KAZTEST system is to assess the Kazakh language knowledge. Assessment is a complicated pedagogical category which involves several levels: level assessment, general assessment and assessment of the language skill as a mode of communication meeting the requirements of vocational competence. There is a correlation between the assessments types mentioned above. Level assessment is mostly applied to the process of teaching. KAZTEST system's language knowledge assessment is an objective means of communicative competence and qualification level determination of the Kazakh language beyond citizens' place of residence, assessment time, object and forms of language learning. Testing the language knowledge as an independent assessment is known and widely used in many countries of the world.

KAZTEST consists of four parts: listening, lexical-grammatical part, reading, writing.

Groups of developers and experts on testing tasks, which includes professors and teachers of leading educational institutions of the republic, the staff of research institutes of linguistics, specialists-testers were created to form the fund of testing tasks on these blocks.

The first part is listening. The level of comprehension of the listened text is evaluated on the four levels:

- 1) fragmentary comprehension;
- 2) general comprehension;
- 3) complete comprehension;
- 4) deep critical comprehension.

The second part is lexical-grammatical part. The level of mastering lexical- grammatical material, language proficiency, use in communication, use in writing is evaluated from functional and communicative point of view. Test tasks of this direction are aimed to assessing the level of linguistic competence, knowledge on structure of the language necessary for fulfilling definite communicative tasks.

The third part is reading. The aim of reading is comprehension of the main and additional information from the text at different levels, ability to read according to pronunciation rules. Definition and estimation of the level of competence in reading are made according to the result of fulfilling the tasks on the following forms of reading:

- 1) skimming reading;
- 2) reading with the elements of research;
- 3) fluent reading;
- 4) scanning reading.

The fourth part is writing. Works are assessed and verified according to the following criteria:

- 1) grammatical correctness of work;
- 2) contents of work;
- 3) quality of using language means in work;
- 4) degree of independence in using the language while writing work.

Under the KAZTEST system a tested has to complete 150 tasks during 150 minutes, which results indicate the percentage of a level of the language knowledge. The test tasks are given in the form of choosing correct answer from possible answers. An advantage of this direction is connected with technological efficiency which consists in simultaneous coverage of a large number of examinees, instant processing and delivery of results.

On blocks of system mentioned above the considerable fund of testing tasks has been created. The KAZTEST system is based on the-level system of language knowledge assessment, which consists of the following levels: beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate,

upper-intermediate, advanced. The tested, who reached certain indicators of the definite level and willing to raise them, has an opportunity to be trained on training courses and to reach desirable level as KAZTEST submits to step sequence. Language level of the tested is defined by the result of the general quantitative index of the completed test. Tasks are ordered by the principle from simple to the difficult. According to this the tested has to have succession between the levels of language knowledge. It is also a mechanism of stimulation of the individual when studying language.

The KAZTEST system is applied to assess level of proficiency of applicants in the Kazakh language for the international scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. N. Nazarbayev for studying and scientific training abroad. In case the applicant passed the threshold level of 60% at the assessment of the Kazakh language knowledge from the total number of testing tasks, he is considered to know the Kazakh language.

From 2013 according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan when forming a personnel reserve of the “A” corpus of government employees, the applicants for vacant positions will have to take a competitive exam where the level of proficiency in the state language is estimated. The level of proficiency in the Kazakh language is determined by the KAZTEST testing system.

Content of testing tasks was determined by the established state standards setting requirements to communicative competences of knowledge of the Kazakh language:

SS RK 1926-2009 “Communicative competence of Kazakh language knowledge. Elementary level. The general knowledge”;

SS RK 1928-2009 “Communicative competence of the Kazakh language knowledge. Pre-intermediate level. The general knowledge”;

SS RK 1929-2009 “Communicative competence of the Kazakh language knowledge. Intermediate level. The general knowledge”;

SS RK 1925-2009 “Communicative competence of the Kazakh language knowledge. Upper-intermediate level. The general knowledge”;

SS RK 1927-2009 “Communicative competence of the Kazakh language knowledge. Advanced level. The general knowledge”.

## **Literature**

1. Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, articles 7 and 93; the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan was approved in the republican referendum of 30 August 1995 with changes and addenda of 21 May 2007

2. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan” (dated 11 July 1997)

3. State program of development and functioning of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020, Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 110 dated 29 June 2011