Introduction

This chapter examines the current state of language policy in Uzbekistan with particular reference to the status of Russian. Uzbekistan has a state language as well as many minority and foreign languages. However, the social functions of these different languages vary and they each have a different official status. Thus Uzbek, the state language, is the language for all spheres of society. There are two approaches to determining the international or intra-national status of a language. One approach is sociolinguistic, the other is administrative-geographic. Conventionally, it is the administrative and geographic approach which has dominated; this has led to Russian, for example, being declared a foreign language in Uzbekistan. The social functions of Russian, though, are much wider and deeper than those of a foreign language. For instance, Russian is a compulsory subject on the official school curriculum and one of the languages of instruction in the higher education system (rather than an optional subject as is usually the case with foreign languages). Hence, Russian should be given the status of a national language in Uzbekistan.

Social and linguistic change in Uzbekistan

Social change always has an impact on language to some extent. In some cases a new sociolinguistic situation turns out to be so extensive that it covers the territory of a number of different states. Thus, for example, the social statuses and the roles of Russian and other languages outside Russia, particularly in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), are highly varied. This meant that after the disintegration of the USSR (or, depending on one’s point of view, after the smooth transformation of the USSR into the CIS), new patterns of expectations and perceptions arose. On the one hand, Russian speakers were increasingly exposed to language phenomena with which they had previously been unfamiliar, whilst on the other hand the Turkic-speaking population of Central Asia and Kazakhstan increasingly expressed the desire to hear their native languages rather than Russian everywhere (including in the media). These new sociolinguistic situations require detailed research since, as recently as fifteen to twenty years ago, such problems were not so acute as they are today. In these new sociolinguistic contexts, among the most urgent issues to be faced are questions about the legal and educational status of the various languages (Dzhusupov 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Dzhusupov & Avazbaev 1991). In bilingual and multilingual societies, finding solutions to these problems demands very specific sociolinguistic understanding and social sensitivity.
According to Bashatova (2002:8):

... for over eleven years, since Uzbek was legalised as the State language by the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Russian has become an official language.

We fully agree with the first part of this statement: Uzbek is undoubtedly the state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan. But why does the author assert that Russian is an official language of the Republic? In fact neither Uzbek nor Russian has the status of an ‘official’ language. The status of languages is determined by the Constitution (Republic of Uzbekistan 1992) and the Law on the State Language (Republic of Uzbekistan 1995); neither of these legislative documents grants official language status to Russian.

In the same article the author continues (Bashatova 2002:8):

... gifted students ... have good language skills ..., [they] speak Russian fluently, and for some of them Russian is the second native language.

The argument that Russian is the ‘second native language’ derives from the ideology of an earlier era. It was Sh.R.Rashidov, the former First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, who first used the expression ‘Russian is the second native language’. Party officials and scholars from Moscow liked both the concept and the way in which it was expressed very much and in consequence the concept was then developed and popularised. The concept found its way into state documents and academic programmes in Russian for schools and higher education institutions where languages other than Russian were used as the medium of instruction. The development of teaching techniques for ‘Russian as a second native language’ started. Then sociolinguistic surveys began to include the question, ‘Do you consider Russian to be your second native language?’

Thus it was that the ideology created an approach to language training in general and Russian in particular. But in essence it was almost completely pseudo-scientific. We know that almost everyone has only one ‘genetic’ native language (except in mixed marriages where two languages are used). In cases where an individual does not have full command of his or her genetic native language (for social or other reasons), we still cannot say that the language which he or she has mastered is the ‘second native language’. Rather, it is a second language that is carrying out the communicative functions of the genetically native language, i.e. the first language. It is not the fault of the individual if, at a very young age, he or she happened to find himself or herself in a foreign speech environment, with the sociolinguistic conditions of a foreign language.

Need for principled approaches to language policy

The situation outlined above, combined with the need to solve other problems relating to the roles of languages in general (and Russian in particular) in the Republic of Uzbekistan, demand that we have an understanding of sociolinguistics. At the same time, it is also necessary that we should have an understanding of relevant legislation in Uzbekistan. We need to be able to see how sociolinguistic ideas are reflected in official documents such as the Constitution and the Law on the State Language.

In this chapter we are of course adopting a systematic and principled sociolinguistic approach. Scientific laws apply equally to all people and in every context. Thus two multiplied by two makes four not only for a Kazakh, but also for a Russian, a Jew, an Englishman and for everyone else. Similarly, gravity attracts everything with the same force; it cannot attract a Kazakh more strongly than a Jew, or a Russian more weakly than an American, or vice versa. We are all equal before the laws of science. Science is above the
individual and above nationality. But, despite all of this, official documents are at times drafted without consideration of the laws of science.

When the objective nature of science is not recognised, or when it is ignored, whether deliberately or otherwise, some serious social, humanitarian, ideological, and even legal consequences are felt. There may even be unexpected or undesirable implications. An example can be seen in the fact that the Constitution of the former USSR stated that the languages of all of its peoples had equal rights. But in 1975 the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a resolution stating that the Higher Attestation Commission or HAC\(^2\) should admit dissertations, abstracts and accompanying documents only in Russian. Automatically, this resolution gave rise to conditions which were counter to the provisions of the article in the Constitution about the equal rights of all languages. Therefore, for example, Kazakh, Uzbek and other languages were not given the opportunity of functioning equally in the field of science. This meant that that the rights and functions of languages other than Russian were being denied, whilst the development of scientific genres in these languages was hindered. This accounts for the resentment against what was perceived to be ‘Russification’ and the infringement of the rights of the non-Russian population of the USSR. This resentment in itself was just one of the circumstances that led ultimately to the disintegration of the USSR. From this one case alone, we can see how important it is for official bodies to develop a well-informed and sensitive policy on language use, so that the rights of peoples and their languages are not infringed.

Functions of languages

The primary function which a nation gives to its language is as the means of communication for the people concerned. Thus Uzbek is the means of communication of the Uzbek people, Russian is the means of communication of the Russian people and so on. In addition, a language can have secondary social functions depending on many factors (geographical, political, ideological, military, diplomatic and others).

One of these secondary or ‘acquired’ functions of language (one which in future may become a top priority) is that of interethnic communication. But this function may not be constant: it may be significant or not, it may disappear and then at a later time it may be revived. This function of being the means of communication between nationalities or ethnic groups is to some extent inherent in any language, but it fluctuates over time if it does not have clear legal status. For instance, in the 19th century French served as a means of international communication for the Russian intelligentsia and gentry. Meanwhile, in the 20th century Russian carried out this function throughout the Soviet Union. The language of international communication can change at any moment. Let us imagine a situation at a bus stop in Tashkent or in Shymkent: a Kazakh, an Uzbek, a Tatar and a Russian are waiting for a bus and are talking to each other in Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek. Moreover, they all understand each other. This means that the language of inter-ethnic or inter-nationality communication can switch frequently in the space of a few minutes. Another example can be found during a scientific conference in Tashkent or in Almaty, where participants are of different nationalities or ethnicities and where presentations are made in Russian, Uzbek or Kazakh. In this way, several different languages are fulfilling the function of the language of inter-nationality or inter-ethnic communication during a period of two or three hours. Hence, any language is able to perform the function of being the means of communication between ethnic groups and between different nationalities, depending on the sociolinguistic situation. In other words, this is a function which is situation-dependent and thus not constant.

At the present time the state language in Uzbekistan (and elsewhere) is rapidly taking on this inter-ethnic function. Yet as recently as ten years ago this role was being played in over 90% of cases by Russian. But it should be noted that expansion of the inter-nationality communication role of Uzbek and Kazakh (within the limits of their respective republics) does not mean that the area in which Russian is also playing this role is being reduced. At the moment we can say that these languages have parallel (though not always

\(^2\) The Higher Attestation Commission was the state body which conferred the higher degrees of Candidate of Science and Doctor of Science as well as scientific titles (Professor).
equivalent) roles in inter-nationality or inter-ethnic communication. Therefore, it can be concluded that
being a language of inter-nationality communication is indeed open to change. Choosing which language
to use for this purpose is a personal matter for the individual; it depends on the sociolinguistic situation.

Now from the foregoing we should be able to conclude that any statement in an official document (such as
a national constitution or a law on state languages) which specifies which language is to be used for
communication between nationalities or ethnic groups is by definition infringing an individual’s
constitutional rights. This is because the individual is being deprived of the right to choose for himself or
herself which language to use in interacting with representatives of other nationalities. Why should a
Kazakh have to use Russian or English when speaking to a Kyrgyz?

In fact, the first drafts of the Law on the State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Law on
Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan both made such statements. Fortunately, however, such
declarations were absent from the final versions of these laws; from the point of view of the rights of the
individual citizen and from the perspective of sociolinguistic reality, this is as it should be.

Legal status of languages in Uzbekistan

The state should have a language or languages with which it can communicate with its people: this goes
without saying. The language (or languages) which state bodies use to communicate with the public is often
determined by legislation which deals specifically with this matter. Examples include cases where one specific
state language is decreed, such as Uzbekistan’s Law on the State Language (Republic of Uzbekistan 1995).
Other examples – including the Law on Languages of Kazakhstan - include nations where the legislation
discusses more than one language (see Republic of Kazakhstan 2001). It is also possible for a language to
carry out the function of a state language de facto without explicit legislation to that effect. For instance,
there was no Law on the State Language in the former USSR, although Russian was in effect playing this role.

According to Article 4 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan (Republic of Uzbekistan 1992:9):

… Uzbek shall be the state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
The Republic of Uzbekistan shall ensure a respectful attitude towards the
languages, customs and traditions of the nations and peoples living in its
territory and create conditions for their development.

The Law on the State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a new wording in 1995 (Republic of
Uzbekistan 1995). In articles dealing with the state language and the languages of the other peoples of the
Republic, the Law decrees that Uzbek shall be the state language of the Republic (article 1); that the languages of
the other peoples and nations in the Republic shall be ensured a respectful attitude and conditions for their
development (article 4); that a defendant in a court case shall have the rights to speak and to have access to
materials concerning the case in his or her native language, whilst the trial procedure itself can be conducted
either in the state language or in the language used by the majority of the population living in the given territory
(article 11); that in the offices of notaries public, at the request of members of the public, texts of documents can
be formulated in the state language, in Russian, or – where appropriate conditions apply - in other languages too
(article 12). Article 9 states that all government organisations will use the state language in transacting their day
to day business and that - depending on prevailing conditions and needs - translation into other languages shall
be provided. The same article declares that both the state language and another language selected by
participants shall be the working languages of international conferences held in the Republic.

Article 10 of the Law states that all businesses, organisations and public associations are to use the state
language in carrying out their routine work, in undertaking statistical surveys and so on. However, if the
majority of employees or members of an organisation do not master Uzbek, then the use of other
languages is permitted alongside the state language.
Therefore it can be seen that Uzbek is the state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and no other language can be equated with it because of the prerogative which it is given in matters of law and official business. In other social activities such as science, the media, the arts and everyday life, there are no restrictions on which languages may be used. But in legal and official business the non-state languages can be used only as secondary ones, e.g. for translating official documents from Uzbek so that they can be understood and used by the non-Uzbek speaking groups in society.

Thus, this analysis of the law relating to language in Uzbekistan allows us to conclude that in fact Russian is one of the national languages of the Republic. This is confirmed by the provision of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan that Russian is given the reference code 10.02.02, i.e. ‘national languages (Russian)’3. The specific definition given in brackets can vary, for example ‘national languages (Kazakh)’, ‘national languages (Tajik)’ and so on.

Nevertheless, some scholars and educationists still tend to give Russian the status of a foreign language. For this reason Russian language teaching methodology is frequently considered from the same point of view as English or German language teaching methodology.

### Status of Russian internationally

At the present time, the status of Russian varies from one country to another. It is:

1. the state language in the Russian Federation4
2. the second state language in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan
3. an official language in the Republic of Kazakhstan
4. one of the national languages in the Republic of Uzbekistan
5. a foreign language in the USA, Japan, etc.

Reflecting the range of functions which it plays in different countries and regions, Russian therefore has at least five different statuses (both official and de facto). Other languages in the Commonwealth of Independent States, as a rule, have at most only two or three official statuses, as the state language, as an official foreign language and as one of the national languages.

In the education systems of different states (except for Russia itself) Russian also has different roles depending on its official status, the frequency with which it is used, education traditions, and the level of linguistic and educational development in a particular country. For example, in the republics of Central Asia, Russian is studied as a non-native language, as a native language and as a foreign language (for the citizens of foreign countries). In other parts of the world, meanwhile, Russian is studied as the first foreign language, as the second or third foreign language, and so on.

Within the education systems of Central Asia, Russian is a compulsory subject in schools and higher education institutions. However, as noted earlier, Russian is sometimes referred to in documents hand in hand with foreign languages such as English and German. For example, provision regarding the advanced training of teachers of foreign languages of higher education and secondary specialised education institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan suggests that specialists in foreign languages and specialists in Russian should be retrained on the basis of the same foreign language curriculum. Russian is not treated as a native or near-native language. Clearly, this does not reflect the reality of the situation; we need only compare the level of linguistic research carried out by Russian teachers with that undertaken by teachers of English, German, and other foreign languages, to see how distinctive the role of Russian is.

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3 The Higher Attestation Commissions of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the other former Soviet republics have a common coding system for academic fields. Thus 10.02.02 is the code for ‘National languages’, 10.02.04 is the code for ‘Germanic languages’, 10.02.19 is the code for ‘General linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics’. The coding system covers all academic fields.

4 The Law on the State Language has not yet been adopted but a draft law is ready and is awaiting approval by the Duma.
Approaches to determining language status

The status of a foreign language is usually determined using one of two approaches. The first of these approaches considers administrative and geographical aspects of the language whilst the second considers the sociolinguistic functions of the language.

From the point of view of administration and geography, English, German, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik can all be treated as foreign languages in Uzbekistan because geographically and administratively they serve as state languages in other states (UK, Germany, Russian Federation, etc). The logic of this administrative or ‘statehood’ approach does not allow any dissent: these languages are ultimately foreign languages. Yet in reality, considering the number of functions played by these languages, they are clearly not all of the same status. Thus, for example, Russian in the territory of Uzbekistan is fully functioning in four of the basic spheres of individual and communal activity, namely everyday life and informal relations between people; the mass media; the arts; and science.

As we noted earlier, in the fields of legislation and government bureaucracy the role of Russian – like that of other national languages such as Kazakh and Tajik - is strictly limited as these are the fields where priority is given to the state language. Nevertheless, the use of Russian in these fields is much wider and deeper than that of any of the other national languages in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, it is quite possible to learn Russian in bilingual situations in Uzbekistan without having to take any special language training. But English, German and other such languages in Uzbekistan - as well as in other member countries of the CIS - can be learned only through special language instruction. These languages are used only in joint venture companies, factories, higher education institutions and the like. Therefore, it is impossible to put them on a par with Russian.

Thus, in contemporary Uzbekistan, from the sociolinguistic point of view, considering the functions which these languages have, Russian - as well as Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz and some other languages - cannot be considered as a foreign language. This makes Russian dissimilar to English, German and others.

In sociolinguistic research, the most reliable results will be gained from studies which begin by looking at the functions which a language actually plays, rather than by considering its geographical and administrative status. A functional approach will precisely differentiate foreign and national (not-state) languages within the Republic and throughout the region at large.

Appropriate methodology for teaching Russian

In the field of education, since Russian in the context of Uzbekistan cannot be defined as a ‘foreign’ language, it is inappropriate to apply the methodology of Russian as a foreign language. However, it may be possible to make use of some techniques borrowed from Russian as a foreign language teaching methodology, but in combination with the traditional methods of teaching Russian as a non-native language. (In Kazakhstan, unlike Uzbekistan, few questions regarding an appropriate methodology for teaching Russian have been raised.)

The staff of the A.S.Pushkin State Institute of the Russian Language (GIRYa) in Moscow and those working in many other higher education and research institutions throughout the CIS and abroad are currently developing and popularising methodologies for teaching Russian as a foreign language. But to a large extent these methodological developments and concepts derive from work being carried out in the A.S.Pushkin GIRYa.

After the break up of the USSR and the closure of NIIPRYaNSSh the demand for new teaching techniques for Russian as a non-native language. This happened because a) the number of schools where

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5 Scientific Research Institute for Teaching Russian in National Schools. The institute, which was based in Moscow, was closed after the break-up of the USSR.
the medium of instruction was a language other than Russian was much smaller than the number of schools where Russian was the medium; b) from a financial point of view, teaching Russian as a non-native language was less attractive than teaching it as a foreign language since foreigners coming from abroad to study Russian are generally very prosperous; and c) education and research centres dealing with the teaching of Russian as a non-native language remained and continued to be fully functional in the CIS countries, so there was rarely any need for them to ask for assistance from institutions and experts in Russia.

This ‘lull’ has inadvertently given some applied linguists and Russian language teaching specialists in Russia the impression that there have been no new developments in Russian language teaching in the other member states of the CIS. They have concluded, incorrectly, that it is now necessary to introduce the teaching of Russian as a foreign language in the other CIS states simply because these states are now independent and because Russian is not their state language.

But such an approach to the teaching of Russian in the CIS countries apart from Russia (particularly in the republics of Central Asia) does not reflect the reality of the situation. In our view, Russian language teaching in the CIS member states should have at least four functions:

1) The teaching of Russian as a non-native language, since for the overwhelming majority of non-Russian people in the other CIS countries, Russian is one means of communication available to them. For this reason the mental image of Russian as a ‘foreign’ language does not exist in the consciousness of most of the non-Russian population in Central Asia. However, people in these countries do perceive Russian to be a ‘non-native’ language. Teaching Russian in this way, as a non-native language, is acceptable in the majority of schools and higher education institutions which use Uzbek, Kazakh and other such languages as the media of instruction.

2) The teaching of Russian as a native language, since this is completely acceptable for those schools and higher education institutions in the CIS countries in which the medium of instruction is Russian.

3) The teaching of Russian based on a synthesis of the principles, concepts, categories and content derived from the teaching of Russian as a non-native language and Russian as a foreign language. We can think of this as a hybrid methodology. The need for such a methodology is urgent and beyond doubt. For instance, compared with the Khorezm area of Uzbekistan, Russian is used with much higher frequency in Tashkent, the capital. In Khorezm, the percentage of people who know Russian is not high (and especially so among secondary school pupils), but then the percentage of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers is not very high there either. In our opinion, the proposed hybrid methodology will be most effective in regions like this.

4) The teaching of Russian as a foreign language. This is needed for groups of foreigners, for example in language centres, university departments of Russian, international schools, and so on. At present there are many foreigners studying in the CIS countries; they study Russian first and then enter various higher education institutions. Language centres and departments of Russian as a foreign language have already been established in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and elsewhere to help people like this.

Some of the techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language can be used with non-foreigners, but only at the very initial stage of training, if the trainees do not know Russian at all and if there is a necessity for them to acquire absolutely basic oral proficiency in Russian. But, beyond the initial stage, their language training should make use of the techniques of teaching Russian as a non-native language.

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6 An example of a technique appropriate for the teaching of Russian as a ‘non-native language’ is the use of comparison between Russian and the learners’ native language. Translation into and out of Russian can be used, even at the beginning stages.

7 When teaching Russian as a native language there is no need to start by teaching the rules of pronunciation.

8 The process of teaching Russian as a foreign language starts with learning material by heart.
Hence, we can see that it is necessary for Russian language education to develop differentiated approaches which are sensitive to the frequency with which Russian is used in a particular region, how well people master Russian in that region, and their specific linguistic and applied linguistic traditions. We think that this problem – the need to develop differentiated techniques for teaching Russian outside Russia - is quite solvable. And the A.S.Pushkin GIRYa can serve as the central research establishment where this differentiated approach can be developed.

From the foregoing we can conclude that, if Russian is to be taught as a foreign language whether in Uzbekistan or in any other Central Asian state, it should be given the same status as English, French, German, Arabic and so on, to become an optional subject for learners. However, in the context of globalisation and the almost ubiquitous attraction of western culture and ways of thinking, the overwhelming majority of students will choose English. Relatively very few learners will choose Russian, and in the long term Russian will disappear from the timetables of schools where Uzbek and Kazakh are compulsory subjects.

However, to permit such a situation to arise would be unthinkable for the secondary and higher education systems in Central Asia and elsewhere. This is because in the post-Soviet world Russian serves as the main intermediary language, building bridges between cultures, bridges for science and education. And that is why Russian should continue to be a compulsory subject in secondary and higher education in Uzbekistan and the other CIS countries. Furthermore, Russian must be taught as a non-native rather than a foreign language.

Conclusions
Twelve conclusions can be drawn from this discussion.
1. State, national and foreign languages are functioning in the Republic of Uzbekistan and in the other CIS countries. That is why Uzbekistan and indeed the entire CIS can be said to constitute a multilingual territory.
2. Sociolinguistic differentiation in the statuses of the various languages used in Uzbekistan can be observed from the fact that these languages do not all have the same functions in the community.
3. The status of a foreign language can be determined using two approaches: the administrative-geographical and the functional-sociolinguistic. An approach which takes into account the range of social functions which a language plays has proved to be more objective and useful as a descriptive tool.
4. Russian in the Republic of Uzbekistan is not a foreign language. It is one of the national languages of Uzbekistan as it is used actively in four areas of society: everyday life, science, the media and the arts. In the fifth area – in legislative and official matters – Russian is used as an intermediary language or as a second language.
5. In the modern world Russian carries out a wide range of social functions. For example, from one state to another its legal status may vary as follows:
   a) state language
   b) second state language
   c) official language
   d) one national language among others
   e) foreign language.
6. Over the last fifteen years Russian language teaching has undergone marked changes. It must now adopt a diversity of approaches, depending on the sociolinguistic, administrative and geographical conditions of the contexts in which it is taking place. These approaches include:
   a) Russian as a native language
   b) Russian as a non-native language
   c) Russian as a foreign language
d) Russian language teaching as a synthesis of the rules, concepts and principles derived from the teaching of Russian as a non-native language and from Russian as a foreign language, in other words a hybrid approach. Consequently, Russian language teaching must develop approaches which are regionally and nationally appropriate, taking into consideration the roles which Russian plays locally, the local education law and other aspects of the context.

7. The role of Russian also varies from one country’s education system to another. For example, it may be studied:
   a) as a native language
   b) as a non-native language
   c) as a foreign language
   d) as a second or third foreign language.

8. For the most part, Russian in the Republic of Uzbekistan and in the other CIS states should be taught as a non-native language.

9. At the moment, there is no single language of international communication. Potentially, any language could play this role, although the frequency with which each language is used in international communication varies considerably.

10. A language’s role as a medium of international communication is a secondary one. In other words, this is an acquired function, since the primary function of language is as a means of communication among a particular people. So, for instance, the primary function of Russian is as the means of communication for the Russian people.

11. The function of international communication which a particular language may play at a particular point in time is not a constant feature of that language. It is a fluctuating phenomenon, and, hence, cannot be legislated for.

12. Determining through a country’s constitution or through other legislation on language that a specific language is to be used for international communication is an infringement of the constitutional rights of a citizen. Every individual has the right to choose which language he or she will employ in interaction with the representatives of other nations and peoples.

References


