Implementation of the Official Language Policy and the Linguistic Reality in Astana, Kazakhstan

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Published online: 28 December 2017

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE LINGUISTIC REALITY IN ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract. Astana is a culturally developing young capital of Kazakhstan. Various ethnic communities as Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Jews, Belarusians, Georgians, Moldovans, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and others live in Kazakhstan. Many languages function and coexist. The city can rightly be called multi-ethnic because its community is heterogeneous. Despite the peculiar ethnic composition and linguistic configuration, the study of functioning language policy in Kazakhstan has been limitedly researched. The purpose of the study is to examine the linguistic landscape of Astana city to the current language policy and linguistic reality. In other words, by examining the linguistic landscape, the research aims at exploring the implementation of the current language policy in Astana and functioning of Kazakh, Russian and English languages displayed on the public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings.

INTRODUCTION

According to the recent data, the current population of Kazakhstan is 18,071,232. The bases of inward migration flows are newcomers from other regions of Kazakhstan, repatriates from nearer, and further foreign countries (World Ometers Info, 2016). As data from the official Internet resource of the Akimat of Astana city show, the number of repatriates is as follows: from Uzbekistan, 37% (4077 people); from China, 21% (2310 people); from Mongolia, 16% (1743 people); from Russia, 15% (1650 people); from Kyrgyzstan, 6% (660 people). Repatriates from Ukraine, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and other states amounted to 5% (560 people). So far, the number of arrivals from CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and non-CIS countries, and the remaining number of repatriates in Astana since 1991 amount to about eleven thousand people. The annual average number of arrivals of Kazakhs for permanent residence in Astana is 10001200 Kazakh people.

Despite the peculiar ethnic composition and linguistic configuration, the study of functioning language policy in Kazakhstan has been limitedly researched. The purpose of the study is to examine the linguistic landscape of Astana city to the current language policy and linguistic reality. In other words, by examining the linguistic landscape, the research aims at exploring the implementation of the current language policy in Astana

and functioning of Kazakh, Russian and English languages displayed on the public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings.

Studying linguistic landscape in Astana city provides interesting insights in the language use of official and private buildings. This research is based on the methodological strategies of Vandenbroucke (2015). The author combines linguistic landscape studies analyzing the linguistic landscape of Brussels capital. Vandenbroucke (2015) measures the visual predominance of the most relevant languages in Brussels capital using both official and nonofficial sign-age of governmental buildings and shop signs.

This research consists of four parts:

1. Reviewing the theoretical background of linguistic landscape;

2. Studying the correlation between the linguistic landscape and language vitality.

3. Defining top-down and bottom-up linguistic landscape items in two streets of Astana.

4. Discrepancy of the threefold technique of languages in researched areas.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Landry and Bourhis (1997) define linguistic landscape as the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs on a given territory or in the regions. Specifically, the notion of linguistic landscape refers to:

"The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Gorter (2006, p. 2) describes that linguistic landscape research is concerned with 'the use of language in its written form in public sphere'. Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hecht (2006) define the linguistic landscape as referring to 'any sign announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location'. Reh (2004) emphasizes that the study of linguistic landscape enables conclusions to be drawn regarding, among other factors, the social layering of the community, the relative status of the various societal segments, and the dominant cultural ideals'. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) underscore that 'Linguistic landscape analysis allows us to point out patterns representing different ways in which people, groups, associations, institutions and government agencies cope with the game of symbols within a complex reality' (p. 27).

Linguistic landscape has two main functions: informative and symbolic. Informative function indicates the borders of the territory of linguistic group. Symbolic function refers to the value and status of the languages as perceived by the members of a language group in comparison to other languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Sutthipornphalangkoon, 2016).

The basic premise of linguistic landscape analysis is the visual language use in public spaces representing observable manifestations of circulating ideas about multilingualism (Purba & Martono, 2017; Shohamy, 2006). The linguistic landscape constitutes the very scene made of streets, corners, circuses, parks, and buildings where society's public life takes place (Hult, 2009).

Thus, the relationship between language policies, ideologies, and the linguistic configuration of the public space has also been the nature of interest in many research including Backhaus (2007), Sloboda, Szabo, Vigers, and Simicic (2010), Dal Negro (2009), Kotze and Du Plessis (2010). These scientific works focus on the examination of the interaction of the language policies and the actual linguistic reality.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS
Linguistic Landscape and Language Vitality

The methodology of research analysis follows the research of Vanderboucke (2010). Investigating the linguistic landscape of Brussels, the author strongly relied on Gorter (2006) with their examination of "each establishment but not each sign" as a unit of analysis. The reason to analyze each establishment as a single unit lies in the fact that "all the signs in one establishment, even if they are in different languages, have been the result of languages used by the same company" (Gorter, 2006).

The data for this research are taken from two commercial streets (Republic and Kabanbay batyr) of Astana city. Traditionally, linguistic landscape studies recognize the importance of choosing diversified areas preferably in terms of geographical location within the larger city (e.g., central or peripheral locales). The decision is focused on central locales (Gorter, 2006), which points out that "the number of linguistic tokens is especially high in shopping areas in cities", that is why most research is focused on these areas.

Linguistic landscape can reveal and confirm existing relationship between ethnic groups in multilingual settings. While, language vitality can demonstrate the extent of using language as a means of communication. In order to explicit the correlation between the linguistic landscape and language vitality, there is a language vitality score system of 1 to 4 (Vandenbroucke, 2015). In this technique, a maximum vitality score of 4 is attributed to an exclusively monolingual unit of analysis or a sign. On the other side, a language receives the minimum score of 1 if it occurs in a subordinate position on the unit. Thus, multilingual signs can occur in a number of combinations. In an "equivalent bilingual" unit, the displayed languages receive an equal score of 2.

According to the research of functioning of Kazakh, Russian and English languages in Astana city, there were analyzed multilingual signs and determined the dominant language (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Tourist Company

As Figure 1 shows, Russian is dominant, yet English and Russian appear only as a sign. Russian receives a score of 3, while Kazakh and English get a score of 1. These are "non - equivalent multilingual signs". Therefore, the sum of the scores is 5 (3+1+1). Kazakh, Russian, and English languages are distributed for different purposes. The slogan "Anyway", as shown in Figure 1 receives a score of 1 for its symbolic value; Kazakh slogan "Turistik kampaniasi" (from the left side) receives a score of 1 as a symbolic value too. Russian slogan "Turistskaia kampania" receives a score of 3 because the words "viza", "vi-

zovaia podderzka", "aviaturizm", and "avaibileti", which have an informative value are all written in Russian (Gorter, 2006).
A total sum of 5 or 6 is also possible in the language vitality score system if the unit of analysis displays more than two languages. To be consistent, this research follows the terminology of Vandenbroucke (2015) who refers to all bilingual and trilingual signs as multilingual. For instance, Figure 2 displays Kazakh, Russian, and English equally. This is a "multilingual equivalent" unit, whereby each of the displayed languages receives a score of 2, making up for a total sum of 6 (2+2+2).

FIGURE 2
Multilingual Sign (Kazakh, Russian, English)

Thus, each unit of analysis in the linguistic landscape of Astana streets was analyzed by means of this score system. In order to take the variation in total sum into account (4, 5, or 6), all the values were fractioned by the total sum per unit of analysis resulting in decimal scores.

Then these scores were summed up to deduce the absolute vitality score per language per street. For the comparative analysis, the relative vitality score was measured by dividing the absolute street vitality score by the number of units in two streets of Astana. These quantitative results and scores are expected to index and indirectly reflect the relationship between the languages displayed in Astana linguistic landscape.

Language Vitality in Republic Avenue

There were analyzed 156 commercial signs in Republic Avenue. More attention was paid to the street vitality of the languages.

The vitality and visibility of the encountered languages were measured by equating the occurrence of a specific language to its dominant, equivalent or subordinate position on the sign. Monolingual units received the highest score of 4, whereas languages displayed in multilingual equivalent signage received an equal score of 2.

Finally, languages on multilingual non-equivalent signs received a score of 3 or 1 depending on their relative dominant or subordinate position on the sign next to Kazakh, Kazakh-Russian, and Kazakh-Russian-English.

This gives a full picture of the linguistic landscape of the researched areas. Afterwards, these scores were fractioned and turned into the absolute score of a language per street vitality score. By means of this system, the language vitality of Kazakh, Kazakh - Russian, and Kazakh Russian English were analyzed (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3
Language Vitality Analysis (Republic Avenue)
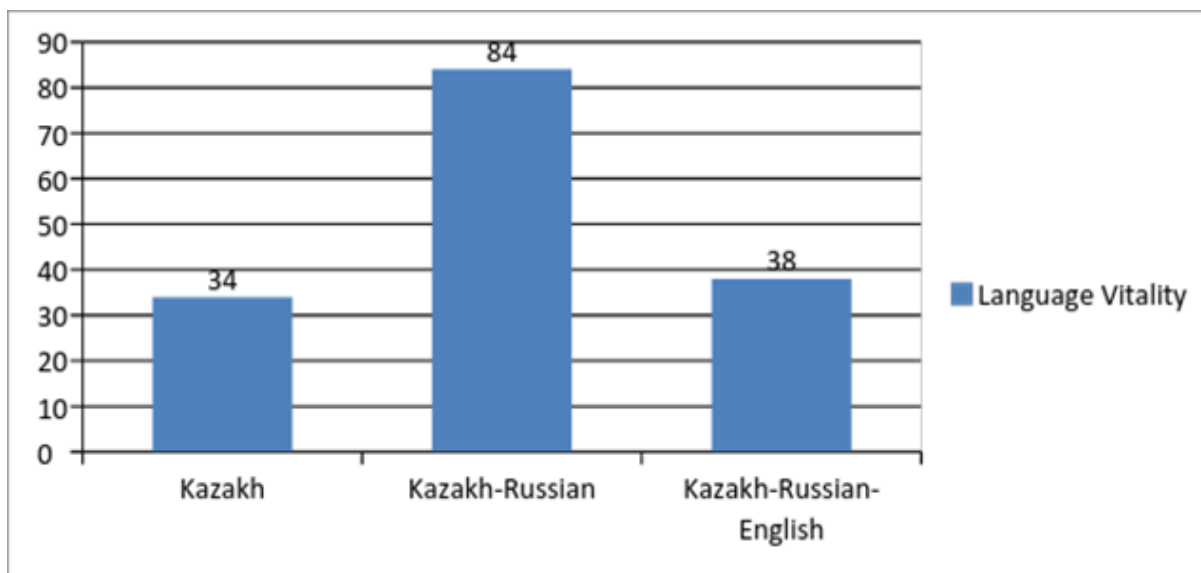
The street vitality score of Kazakh-Russian is the largest (84), followed by Kazakh-Russian-English (38), and Kazakh (34). Republic Avenue is one of the oldest streets in Astana and the number of commercial signs is presented in Kazakh and Russian. These commercial signs were not renamed, but preserved their former names. At present, there are only 34 commercial signs in Kazakh. According to the language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, nowadays, commercial signs are written in Kazakh-Russian-English (38).

Language Vitality in Kabanbay Batyr Avenue

There were analyzed 84 commercial signs in Kabanbay batyr Avenue. Street vitality of the researched area shows that Kazakh-Russian (42) has a very high score in comparison with Kazakh (9) and Kazakh-Russian-English (33). In its turn, Kazakh is used less because commercial signs are translated into Russian or English (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4
Language vitality (Kabanbay batyr's Avenue)
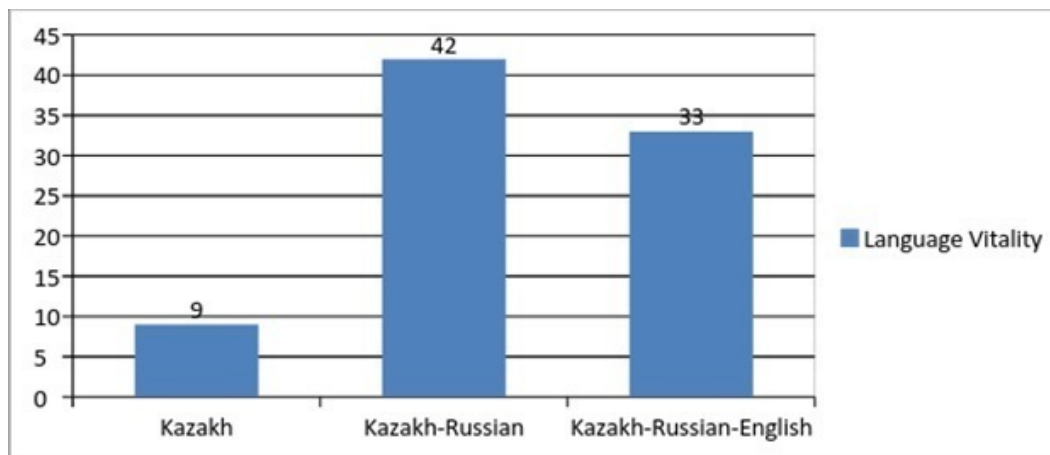
Thus, the language vitality of two main streets in Astana determines the position of Kazakh, Russian, and English languages on the signs. In general, the signs in Kazakh are 17.9%, Kazakh-Russian 52.5%, and Kazakh-Russian-English 29.6%. The Kazakh language is dominant in all positions (Kazakh, Kazakh-Russian, and Kazakh-Russian-English).

Having determined the dominant position of the language in this research it was set up top-down and bottom-up linguistic landscape items.

Defining Top-Down and Bottom-Up Linguistic Landscape Items

Methodologically, linguistic landscape analysis relies on the specific location and their surroundings (Backhaus, 2007; Shohamy, 2006) or a range of localities (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006). Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) distinguished between top-down and bottom-up items. Top-down linguistic landscape items include public institutions (educational, religious, governmental, medical, cultural), public signs of general interest, public announcements, and signs of street names. Bottom-up items include shop signs (clothing, food, and jewelry), private business signs (offices, factories, agencies), and private announcements (advertisements, sale, rent).

Researching top-down and bottom-up linguistic items, the findings, as displayed in Table 1, demonstrate some differences in two researched areas. In Republic Avenue, there is stronger presence of Kazakh in top-down items than in bottom-up ones. In Kabanbay-batyr Avenue, there are no systematic differences between top-down and bottom-up items. Bottom-up items are trilingual (Kazakh-Russian-English), while the top-down items are bilingual (Kazakh and Russian). There are no signs only in Russian in top-down items. All official signs are displayed in Kazakh and Russian.

TABLE 1
Top-Down and Bottom-Up Items of Researched Areas

Languages	Republic Avenue		Kabanbay Batyr Avenue	
	Top-Down (No. of Items and %)	Bottom-Up (No. of Items and %)	Top-Down (No. of Items and %)	Bottom-up (No. of Items and %)
Kazakh only	21.8 ($n = 12$)	21.7 ($n = 22$)	15.2 ($n = 7$)	5.2 ($n = 2$)
Russian only	-	7.9 ($n = 8$)	-	-
Kazakh-Russian	60 ($n = 33$)	42.5 ($n = 43$)	65.3 ($n = 30$)	31.6 ($n = 12$)
Kazakh-Russian-English	18.2 ($n = 10$)	27.9 ($n = 28$)	19.5 ($n = 9$)	63.2 ($n = 24$)
Total	100.0 ($n = 55$)	100.0 ($n = 101$)	100.0 ($n = 46$)	100.0 ($n = 38$)

In general, in top-down linguistic items there is a substantially stronger presence of bilingual (Kazakh and Russian) and trilingual (Kazakh-Russian-English) signs compared with bottom-up signs. Bottom-up items in Kabanbay batyr Avenue (63.2%) contain a significantly higher percentage of trilingual signs than Republic Avenue (27.9%). In the result of top-down and bottom-

up items researching, the discrepancy of three languages was revealed. According to Bauckhaus's (2006) statement, the relationship between linguistic landscapes of multilingual settings is reflected "in the order and the size of languages". Scollon and Scollon (2003) have developed a "place semiotics" system where languages on signs are analyzed by means of a threefold technique: a code preference system, an inscription system, and an emplacement system.

A Code Preference System

There is a spatial organization of the sign. The preferred code is commonly placed in the west at the top or left side of the sign (Vandenbroucke, 2015). In Figure 1, Kazakh, Russian, and English are equally displayed according to the linguistic vitality score system. From the view of spatial organization of the languages on the sign, English is clearly dominant because it is positioned at the centre. If one of the languages appears in a more prominent size, font or color than the other or in better material qualities, then this language is considered the preferred code (Vandenbroucke, 2015). Thus, on the sign of the "ANYWAY", the English inscription is much larger in size and more eye-catching than Kazakh and Russian inscriptions.

The category of code preference in terms of material qualities showed little variation in the researched areas. All the inscribed languages on the signs were equivalent in terms of the materials used. According to the research, there is a little disparity concerning the category "size".

The 'Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Languages' states: all signs shall be written in the equal in size letters. The greatest disparity of the category of "size" was found with 75% of the signs displayed in Kazakh-Russian-English signs (Figure 5, 6). These Figures (5, 6) also show the difference in terms of "font" code preference. There is a slight variation with Kazakh-Russian signs in two researched streets.

FIGURE 5
Republic Avenue Traveler's Coffee

FIGURE 6
Kabanbai Batyr Avenue Fashion House

FIGURE 7
Shoes Shop

The Kazakh-Russian sign of this shop is presented in different fonts and sizes (Figure 7). Additionally, the categories of "colour", "size", and "font" do not refer to the code of preference and do not match with the requirements and standards of commercial names. Almost 60% of Kazakh-English and Kazakh-Russian-English signs are not effectively serving their purpose of providing clear information. In particular, many signs are badly located, cannot be read under night-time conditions, and have lettering, which is too small or indistinct.

An Inscription System

Study the correlation between the linguistic landscape and language vitality, defining top-down and bottom-up linguistic landscape items in two streets in Astana, leading to the identification of the discrepancy of threefold technique of languages.

Out of the 240 encountered units in the photographic materials, only 56% are displayed in accordance with the Law.

The 'Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Languages' (1997) states: "Traditional, historically formed Kazakh names of inhabited localities, streets, squares, as well as of other physic-geographical objects should be reproduced in other languages in compliance with transliteration rules. Names of state organizations and structural subdivisions thereof shall be given in the State and the Russian languages. Names of joint ventures and foreign organizations should be given with transliteration in both the state and the Russian languages". As the research showed, in Republic Avenue, Banks names (Halyk bank, Kaspi Bank, Forte bank) are presented in compliance with transliteration rules both in Kazakh and Russian (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8
Halyk Bank (Public)

Medical and cultural establishment signs are written in Kazakh with capital letters in the centre according to the inscription system (Figure 9, 10).

FIGURE 9
Drugstore

FIGURE 10
The Youth Palace

The signs of these commercial names in Figure 11 are displayed in Kazakh-Russian (uvelirnaya masterskaya Astany - Astana zergerlik sheberkhana).

FIGURE 11
Jeweler's Workshop of Astana

FIGURE 12
Hotel

The commercial name of this building is given in three languages (konak yui-gostinitsa-hotel). As it is seen that top-down linguistic items correspond to the inscription system.

An Emplacement System

The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Languages (2017) states:

"Forms, signboards, advertisements, advertising, price lists and other visual information shall be set forth in the state and the Russian languages and, if required, in other languages too. All texts of visual information shall be placed in the following order: from the left or the top - in the state language, from the right or the bottom - in the Russian language and shall be written in the equal in size letters. If required, the texts of visual information may be given additionally in other languages. In this case the type size should not exceed the requirements specified by normative legal acts" (Ch. 4, Art. 21).

Official signs or top-down linguistic items clearly demonstrate a combination of Kazakh-Russian and Kazakh-Russian-English (Figure 13).

FIGURE 13
National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan

This example is one of the visual aids to present signs of top-down and bottom-up linguistic items. The main word Halyk Bank is given in the right side at the top, and Kazakhstan Halyk Banki (Kazakh) - Narodnyi Bank Kazakhstana (Russian). The next example of the sign is konsultatsionyi tsentr dlya predprinimatelei is presented in Kazakh-Russian with the same font size.

DISCUSSION

According to the research, the bottom-up items includes more signs in the linguistic landscape of Astana. Out of 240 signs from Republic Avenue and Kabanbay batyr Avenues, 52.5% are bottom up signs and 42.5% are top-down items. In Republic and Kabanbay Batyr Avenues, Kazakh prevails over Russian and English. However, the vitality score of Kazakh-Russian is the highest in Republic Avenue, 53.8% and in Kabanbay batyr Avenue 50%. This confirms the statement, that in areas with top-down items, Kazakh and Russian predominate. Kazakh, Kazakh-Russian or Kazakh-Russian-English do not follow the threefold technique in bottom-up items (Figure 14).

FIGURE 14
The Predominant Language Categories in Researched Areas
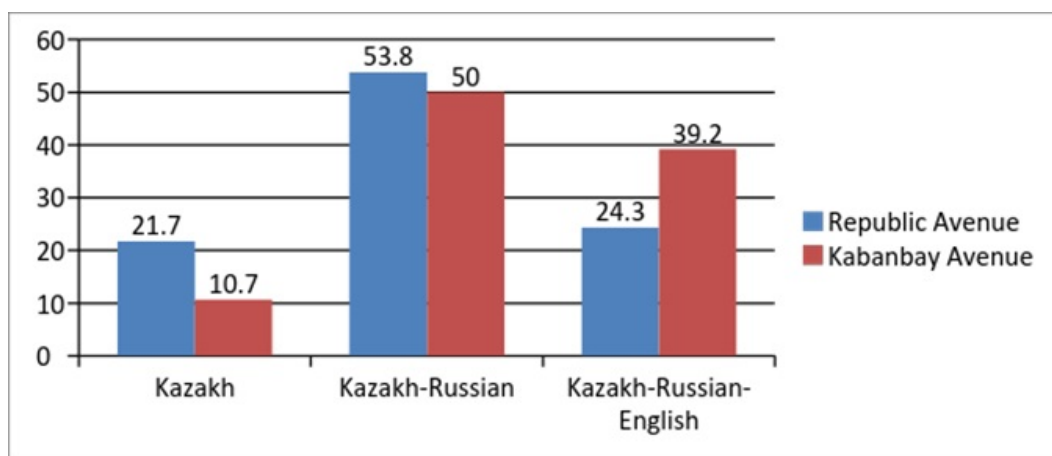
In all of the researched areas, English occupies a noteworthy place in the general landscape of Astana, but there is no unity between Kazakh and English in the display of bottom up and top down signs. On non-official signs, Kazakh-Russian-English scores are significantly higher in Kabanbay Batyr Avenue 39.2%, and as expected, the lowest is in Republic Avenue (24.3%). The profusion of English distribution on non-official signs confirms that English has gained its international importance in Astana. Cenoz and Gorter (2008) also clarify a similar rationalization for the use of English in their study, when pointing out that English has grown to be the language of "international communication".

Another possible explanation for the prominence of English relates to its "global" and "international" status worldwide. The profuse visibility of English in the public space combined with a fair command of the language contributes to the attraction of the city as a touristic location. Bruyel-Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2105) have proved in their studies that the appearance and use of English as a "global language" in the public space which affect the overall experience of tourists. The density of using English in bottom-up and top-down signs suggests the acknowledgement of its global relevance in the capital of Kazakhstan.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at interpreting the data in two researched areas by means of quantitative research methodology. In this way, this study describes the relationship between Kazakh, Russian, and English from a top-down to a bottom-up perspective in order to find the discrepancy between the official language policy and the linguistic reality in Astana city as expressed in the linguistic landscape.

The most striking investigation in the interpretation of the quantitative results relates to the visibility and the use of Kazakh in the linguistic landscape of the researched areas. The Kazakh language holds a strong position in Astana as the capital of Kazakhstan. It directly relates to the vitality of the language and its speakers. In consideration of the top-down and bottom-up items in Astana city, threefold technique of using languages there is a necessity to follow the following guidelines to achieve a general improvement in name signing:

- Top - down linguistic landscape items should be presented in Kazakh and Russian languages.
- Bottom-up items should be presented in Kazakh, Russian and other languages;
- Foreign company names should be presented in foreign languages, but they should be transliterated into Kazakh and Russian.

- Names or signs in the Kazakh language should be the main dominant word by the code preference system.
- Signs or names of private companies should be in the left side at the top in Kazakh and in the right side at the bottom in Russian according to the emplacement system.
- The letters of signs should have the same size, font and color as in Kazakh, Russian or other languages as in an inscription system.

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