

MAIN DIRECTIONS OF UZBEKISTAN'S "SOFT POWER" STRATEGY: LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE OF THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This article examines the strategic significance of the national language in the context of implementing Uzbekistan's "soft power" policy. It analyzes the main directions of the state language policy, as well as issues related to strengthening the position of the Uzbek language on the international stage. Furthermore, the study addresses the processes of teaching Uzbek abroad, the tools of educational diplomacy, cultural exchange programs, and opportunities to enhance the prestige of the language through modern information and communication technologies.

Keywords

soft power, language policy, Uzbek language, state language, international prestige, national interests, cultural diplomacy, transition to the Latin script.

In the context of modern globalization, the authority and image of states in the international arena are determined not only by their economic or military potential, but also by the degree of cultural influence, namely, the attractiveness of the state, the richness of its cultural and spiritual heritage, the system of values and political image formed through the mechanism of "soft power". Its rich culture, language, education, values and lifestyle attract the attention of other countries and serve to strengthen diplomatic cooperation. In particular, Uzbekistan today pays special attention to the restoration of national identity, the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, as well as the formation of a national brand in the international arena. (For example, Samarkand was recognized as the "cultural capital of the Turkic world-2023", and Bukhara and Khiva have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.) The country's open foreign policy has transformed cultural,

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educational, tourism, and media diplomacy, along with language policy, into strategic components of soft power.

The language constitutes as the foundation for the international presence of the state, the transmission of its culture, the provision of global communication and the development of economic cooperation. In this context, the international prestige of the Uzbek language is not only linguistic, but also political, cultural, economic and even geostrategic.

The theory of soft power assumes the expansion of the international influence of a state through its cultural attractiveness, spiritual values and the nature of the political system. As you know, the term "soft power" was introduced into scientific circulation by the American researcher J. R. R. Tolkien. Hiding and denotes the state's ability to exert influence through the attractiveness of its national values, culture, and political institutions.

Language is a key part of this process: it not only transmits culture, art and literature, but also enables international communication and shapes the image of the state on the world stage.

In Uzbekistan, the policy of soft power is implemented in activities aimed at promoting cultural heritage abroad, in educational and scientific cooperation, cultural diplomacy, as well as in the language policy pursued by the state. Among these areas, language assumes a special place, since it is specifically unites all the components of soft power as the main means of communication.

The status of the Uzbek language as the state language was established by the Law " On the State Language " of 1989. After gaining independence, the legal framework for language policy was expanded: directions were identified to increase the level of use of the state language, regulate its use in official documents, develop the lexical fund (the new edition of the explanatory dictionary of the Uzbek language includes 80 thousand words, which indicates an increase of the vocabulary by 20 thousand units), as well as improve the transition to the Latin script.

Over the past five years, important regulatory acts have been adopted at the state level aimed at increasing the prestige of the Uzbek language as the state language:

1. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-5850 dated December 21, 2019 "On measures to radically improve the prestige and status of the Uzbek language as the state language";
2. Presidential Decree No. PF-6084 of October 20, 2020 "On measures for further development of the Uzbek language and improvement of language policy";

3. Resolution "On approval of the Concept of development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030", including the attached "Concept of development of the Uzbek language and improvement of language policy for 2020-2030";

4. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 20, 2025 "On additional measures for further development of the state language".

The status of the Uzbek language as the state language not only reinforces the country's political independence, but also serves as a strategic basis for internal and external communication. In this sense, the key objectives of the language policy are: strengthening the position of the Uzbek language in public life, expanding its use in state institutions, in the education system, in official, scientific and public communication; developing modern linguistic technologies, including the national corpus and applications based on artificial intelligence; strengthening control over the implementation of the measures indicated above in governmental decisions.

At the same time, it should be noted that the work carried out in recent years has yielded tangible results. Against the background of strengthening the international image of Uzbekistan, intensifying cooperation with Turkic states and expanding international relations, more and more attention is being paid to Uzbek culture, art, architecture, national values, cultural heritage and tourist potential of the country. This, in turn, contributes to the growth of interest in the Uzbek language and literature abroad. Increasing the volume of Uzbek-language content on digital platforms is becoming one of the key indicators of its growing prestige. Today, the Uzbek language is taught in Turkey, South Korea, the United States, Russia, Hungary, Japan, Germany, Italy and other countries. Academic research in Central Asia is expanding at foreign universities. For example, the first Uzbek novel "O'tkan kunlar" ("Bygone Days") has been translated into a number of foreign languages, and this year it has become available to Korean readers as well.

Language policy is central to Uzbekistan's soft power strategy. However, its further development requires addressing a number of important tasks:

Uzbekistan's transition to the Latin script facilitates integration into the global information space. At the same time, the parallel use of Cyrillic and Latin scripts leads to a declining literacy, an increase in spelling errors and the formation of a tolerant attitude towards them as a "common phenomenon". The long-term incompleteness of the reform negatively affects both the domestic culture of writing and the perception of the Uzbek language abroad. The lack of consistency of standards between the education system, the publishing sector, government agencies and the media creates significant difficulties and slows down the entry of Uzbek literature and scientific works into the international level.

Existing regulations, including Cabinet Resolutions No. 61 of February 10, 2021 and No. 662 of October 28, 2021, provide the legal basis for completing the transition. Further attempts to reform individual letters ("O", "G", "Sh", "Ch") only complicate the process. The full transition to the Latin alphabet is critical for global integration and the country's modern image.

The number of foreign students at universities in Uzbekistan is growing, which opens up new opportunities for language promotion. It is necessary to systematize and improve the programs of teaching Uzbek as a foreign language, particularly through the creation of textbooks for levels B2, C1, C2.

Currently, there is a gap between the language policy implemented at the State level and actual practice. Despite the increased status of the Uzbek language, Russian continues to dominate in many areas -official office work, the scientific environment, administrative and business communication-which creates obstacles to further improvement of the state language and expansion of its scope. There is no doubt about the international role of the Russian language, but the fact that official documents, the e-government system, and judicial practice are still not fully adapted to the Uzbek language indicates that the language policy is insufficiently effective at the institutional level.

In addition, the lack of a unified terminology system in a number of key areas, in particular diplomacy and economics, constitutes a serious barrier to the development of a scientific style of speech. As a result, the intellectual potential and expressive capabilities of our rich language are not fully utilized .

Strengthening cultural and linguistic ties with foreign compatriots is an important element of soft power. It is necessary to develop centers for studying the Uzbek language abroad, increase the number of online courses, expand the digital national corpus, and increase the availability of translations of classical and modern literature. The insufficient availability of high-quality Uzbek-language media content limits the potential of language as a soft power resource.

The educational system is experiencing a decline in the level of written and oral literacy. The prevalence of grammatical errors in the media and the Internet, violation of the norms of the literary language affect its prestige and contribute to a decrease in the overall culture of speech.

To solve these problems, it is necessary to strengthen the prestige of the language through the consistent implementation of the state language policy; complete the transition to the Latin alphabet; develop terminology, scientific and digital language; systematically promote the Uzbek language and culture abroad; increase the culture of the language through education and media. Language policy plays a key role in Uzbekistan's soft power strategy. The growing international

status of the Uzbek language enhances the country's global attractiveness, improves the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy and expands educational cooperation. In the future, the development of the digital infrastructure of the language, the increase in the number of foreign language centers and the expansion of scientific and innovative approaches will further strengthen its international position. Strengthening the global status of the Uzbek language directly contributes to the growth of Uzbekistan's soft power potential, and therefore language policy is an integral part of the country's long-term development strategy.

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